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THE CANADIAN DECISION TO ENTER WORLD WAR II:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES THROUGH THE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

BY  
DAVID BICKFORD, B.A.  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR, 1971

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the Canadian decision-making process and the pressures thrust upon the policy-makers in the Canadian government before and during the crucial period in September, 1939 when Canada declared war on Germany.

The first two chapters of the thesis examine the political situation and the pressures exerted upon the Canadian government in the inter-war period, and the government response to these insistent demands. This section is designed to construct the political environment, both external and internal, upon which the decision to go to war was based.

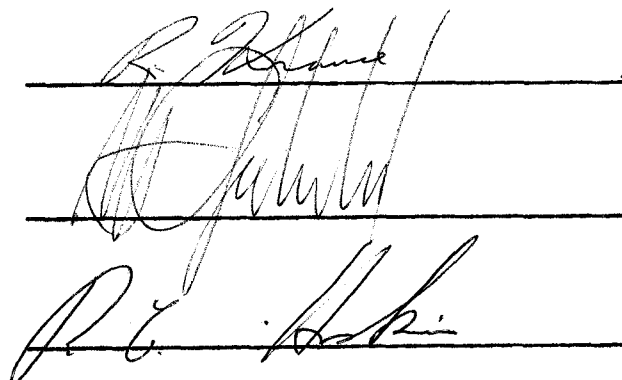
The next chapter deals with the political institutions which comprised the Executive, Legislature and Bureaucracy as well as their powers and methods of functioning in 1939. The major decision-makers and their political platforms and interests are discussed within the context of this institutional framework.

Chapter 4 deals with the decision itself, and is subdivided into two major sections. The first of these deals with Canada's external relations in the September 1 to 10 period, and includes discussion on the Canadian responses to external stimuli in that period, the week of "active

neutrality" from September 3 to 10, and the interactions between Canada and Great Britain on the diplomatic, military-strategic and cultural levels. The second section of this chapter is an analysis of the Special Session of Parliament; the pro and anti-war arguments, the role of the Cabinet in the decision, and the results of the Session in regards to national unity and immediate war aims.

The conclusion examines the effects of the declaration of war on Canada. A description of the challenges to the Federal Government from Quebec and Ontario, the conscription crises of 1942 and 1944 and Canada's contribution to the allied war effort are described in this chapter. The chapter closes with an examination of Canadian-American and Anglo-Canadian relations in the war years.

APPROVED:

Three handwritten signatures are written on three horizontal lines. The top signature is 'R. Z. H. H. H.', the middle signature is 'H. H. H. H.', and the bottom signature is 'R. E. H. H. H.'.

## PREFACE

After this particular topic was suggested by my advisor some time ago, initial research immediately showed that such a study offered great potential. First of all, this was the first major decision made by an independent Canadian government for which original documentation is available in any quantity. Documents from the Public Archives for 1939 have emerged from under the thirty year clause and have been made available for research purposes.

A second point of interest about this particular study is that it has not been adequately researched as have the pre-war and wartime periods of Canadian politics and international relations. Books on the pre-war period discuss the political situation up to the 1939 decision, but do not discuss the decision itself. Works on World War II start at the 1939 decision to go to war, but do not analyse that decision in any depth. My particular study is an attempt to bridge this void.

In conclusion, I wish to express appreciation to the Canadian Archivist and his Staff for their help in providing access to the W.L.M.King Papers from the pre-war years as well as to related documents. The National Library in Ottawa was also of great assistance in allowing me the use of their facilities. I thank my advisor Dr.

W.C. Soderlund for his encouragement and sound critical advice so often delivered, but so often needed, and to Mr. R.G. Krause and Mr. R.G. Hoskins for their practical and valuable assistance which was most gratefully received.



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## INTRODUCTION

In order to discuss the Canadian decision to enter World War II in some depth, it is first necessary to examine the background to the decision, both to put this resolution in perspective, and in the belief that decisions are not made in a vacuum, but are dependent upon past experiences.

I have attempted to make a clear-cut distinction between the external and internal components of this environment under the assumption that external pressures can be separated from those of the internal political system and may influence government decisions to follow policies that might not otherwise have been considered. Foreign policy, of course, is not made in a vacuum. What the internal political structure might dictate may not be possible due to the pressures exerted from outside the system. This concept is perhaps best illustrated by Michael Brecher, whose general structural differentiation of variables into external and internal components has been loosely applied in the first section of this thesis. The specific variables used in the Brecher research model, especially in the external field, apply more closely to a post-war power analysis with emphasis placed upon bloc interactions and the relations between the super-powers, and are therefore not

as relevant to a pre-war situation. Thus, in this decision these variables have not been used extensively, although the general framework has been used. (Appendix A) Karl Deutsch also uses this differentiation between external and internal variables in his communications model of foreign policy decision-making. (Appendix B)

Chapters one and two discuss the background to the decision to enter World War II, with special reference to the environment as it affected Canadian decision-makers in 1939. Chapter one discusses the external situation, focusing on Canada's relations with the League of Nations, and various world powers in the inter-war period. The Chapter closes with a discussion of the effects upon Canada of the remilitarization of the Rhineland.

Chapter two discusses the internal environmental configuration, centering upon the various pressures and structures within the political system that affected the decision to enter World War II. The political structure includes a short discussion of the two political cultures of Canada, and the differing attitudes of French and English Canadians towards participation in World War II. Earlier problems such as the Conscription Crisis of 1917, the Depression, the mood of isolation in the pre-war era, and their effects upon the decision-makers have been included as important factors influencing the decision. Regionalism, Public opinion, the platforms of political parties, as well as influential interest groups are of great importance in establishing the political climate of 1939. When both of these

chapters are taken in conjunction with each other, it can be seen that divergencies and pressures exerted from the external and internal environment often lead to serious problems for the decision-makers.

In Chapter three, the thesis shifts focus and deals with the ideals, platforms and roles of the decision-makers and how they are shaped and modified by the institutional structure. The implication drawn from this combination of institutional and personal roles is simply that no matter how brilliant, personable or well-intentioned a political figure may be, he is only as influential or as powerful as the political structure allows him to be.

Several other important points are raised in this chapter. Due to the nature of the decision, it can be classified as a "crisis decision" according to the criteria outlined by Glen D. Paige.<sup>1</sup> In Paige's scheme, the Canadian decision closely fits the criteria for a "crisis decision", in that a decision of this type is one that:

1. Threatens high priority goals of the decisional unit.
2. Restricts the amount of time in which a response could be made. [and is]
3. Unexpected or unanticipated by the members of the dec-

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<sup>1</sup>Characteristics of a "Crisis decision":

1. Occasion for decision- thrust upon their organization from outside.
2. Decision-making structure.
3. Internal setting relationships- other organizations present which can challenge the legitimacy of the decisions taken.
4. External setting relationships- the presence of allies and enemies over which the decision-makers cannot exercise arbitrary control.

G.D. Paige, "The Korean Decision", in J.N. Rosenau, ed. International Politics and Foreign Policy (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 462.

ision-making unit.<sup>2</sup>

Again, the Canadian decision fits this definition, except, perhaps for the third criteria since the leaders of the Cabinet and External Affairs Department had some idea of German intent well ahead of the event.

If, however, the Canadian case can be loosely classified as a "crisis" decision, one of Paige's conclusions is readily confirmed by the Canadian decision; that

"The greater the crisis, the greater the acceptance of responsibility for action by the leader and more the follower expectation and acceptance of the leader's responsibility...The greater the crisis, the greater the reliance upon the central themes in previously existing information."<sup>3</sup>

Chapter five analyzes the immediate decision-making period in considerable depth and is divided into an internal and an external component. The first section deals with the external pressures exerted upon Canada during the period from September 1 to 10, 1939, and the responses of Canada to external stimuli such as the Russo-German Non-aggression Pact, the invasion of Poland, and the British declaration of War on September 3, 1939. The effect of the week of Canadian "active neutrality" from September 3 to 10, and the United States' and German reactions to this neutrality are discussed in this section, as are Anglo-Canadian interactions in the military and diplomatic areas. One major conclusion of this thesis is that King used neutrality to

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 462.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 469 and 472.

establish Canadian independence from Great Britain, as well as to use this specific decision as a precedent for future Canadian action in foreign affairs, recognized by the world as independent deliberations.

The internal analysis concentrates exclusively upon the Special Session of Parliament, and activity in both the Cabinet and the House of Commons in this particular period. The results of the Special Session; the declaration of war, the maintenance of national unity, and the elucidation of the immediate war aims of Canada conclude this section of the paper.

Again, in the conclusion, the internal-external division is maintained in outlining the results of the declaration of war. The internal section deals with the immediate challenges from Quebec and Ontario to the King government's handling of the war effort, as well as, the major conscription crises of 1942 and 1944.

The external section deals with the overall Canadian contribution to the Allied war effort, and focuses on both the short-run and the long-run effects of Canadian-American and Anglo-Canadian co-operation during the war period.

## CHAPTER I

### The Environment in which the Decision was made:

#### The External Situation

One Canadian reaction after the close of the First World War in 1918 was to retreat into a posture of non-involvement in the affairs of Europe. Sixty thousand Canadians had died in the Great War, and it was felt that no repetition of this could be allowed in the future. Canada had several choices of action in achieving this goal. At one extreme was strong support for the League of Nations and involvement in Europe to ensure peace for all time. The opposite extreme was to remove Canada completely from European affairs, retreating into isolation, and leaving Europeans to settle their own problems.

Canada followed a policy somewhere in between the two alternatives outlined. Canada elucidated a policy of limited involvement in European affairs, but short of committing Canada to any definite action or policy in concrete terms. Canada signed the Peace Treaty of 1919 and joined the League of Nations but made it clear to Europe that Canada's involvement in future might only be a moral stand on specific issues.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J.M. Bliss, ed. Canadian History in Documents (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966), pp. 303-5.

The Canadian delegate to the League (M. Dandurand) castigated the United States for not supporting the League and made it clear that Canada would not bear the whole North American burden herself. He reiterated this stand in the now-famous "fire-proof house" speech of 1924 emphasizing the continental character and geographical isolation of Canada from the problems of an inflammatory Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Canada, quite naturally, saw herself as a nation removed from any potential enemy. She was bordered by two oceans adequately patrolled by the Royal Navy, the North Pole, and a friendly United States to the South. Thus, the scope of this Dominion's European involvement was to help solve problems peacefully so that Canadians would never again have to fight in Europe over European problems. The first test for this limited involvement policy centered around the Chanak crisis of 1922. As Prime Minister King described the situation:

"I confess it [the official request for aid from Britain] annoyed me. It is drafted designedly to play the imperial game, to test out centralization vs. autonomy as regards to European wars...I have thought out my plans...No contingent will go without Parliament being summoned in the first instance...I am sure the people of Canada are against participation in this European war."<sup>3</sup>

Although the other Dominions promised Britain support,

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 304-5.

<sup>3</sup>R.C. Brown and E. Prang, ed. Confederation to 1949 (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 299-300.



Canada firmly refused to send troops in the event of war. It is true that King's refusal could be construed as an effort to assert Canadian autonomy,<sup>4</sup> but it is also an instance where Canada showed a strong reaction to involvement in European affairs, as this further statement of MacKenzie King illustrates:

"A good deal of time has been given by Canada to the affairs of Europe during recent years. The time has come when we are justified in giving attention to our own problems, and meddling just as little as possible in the affairs of other countries or other parts of the British Empire where our interest is not immediate and direct."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the classic example of the policy of limited involvement is the Riddell Incident of 1935. After the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the League voted to apply sanctions on certain items being imported by Italy. Canada's delegate, Walter Riddell, tried to put some force into the sanctions by initiating a proposal (without Government consent) to extend the embargo to include coal, oil and petroleum. Without these commodities Italy could not sustain her military drive into Ethiopia and could not run industry and transport at home without heavy disruptions. There was some question as the time that Riddell had taken this stand upon the advice of the British government, whose delegates did not want to disrupt the good relations existing between Britain and Italy. This rumour, whether true or not, did filter back to the Canadian Government, as the

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<sup>4</sup>H. Blair Neatby, MacKenzie King, The Lonely Heights (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>W.L.M. King Papers, "Memoranda & Notes", Vol 60, pp. C46601-2.

following telegram from the Secretary of State for External Affairs to Riddell indicates:

"You must of course realize that you are acting for the government of Canada and not for any other government, delegation or committee. When you desire instructions on any proposal you should communicate sufficiently in advance to give time for consideration here."<sup>6</sup>

This was an improper reprimand by the Canadian government since no direction had been given Riddell after repeated appeals, and the failure in communication should more rightly have been placed upon the government, at the time in the process of changing leadership after the 1935 election. The effect of the failure of the government to back Riddell was the collapse of any effective League sanctions against Italy. King explained Canada's position on January 11, 1936 in answer to one letter from a constituent:

"It [the Canadian Government] is prepared to consider, with the other members of the League, any proposal made for the extension of such sanctions. It does not consider that Canada should take the initiative in urging the adoption of sanctions proposals raising special questions of co-ordination and enforcement by countries other than Canada."<sup>7</sup>

No other nation was willing to take the initiative in this instance, ending the possibility of stopping aggression through this body. In this way, Canadian appeasement policies closely paralleled those of Great Britain, with emphasis on conciliation to achieve peace and goodwill. The differences between the two countries came in their

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<sup>6</sup> W.L.M. King Papers, "Statements & Speeches", p. 181187.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 189810.

approach to the League. Canadian delegates since the early 1920's had exhorted the European nations to live in harmony as did the two great nations of North America, a somewhat ingenuous and unrealistic, if not to say patronizing, approach to solving the problems of Europe. Perhaps the most pertinent and positive suggestions to the League were those of MacKenzie King, delivered in 1936.

In his speech to the League on September 29, he reiterated the Canadian stand that no nation should be automatically committed to the use of force in foreign relations through the League. He emphasized Canada's experiences in the League, North America and the Commonwealth as examples of "peaceful co-existence". He emphasized the need to have all the powers, large and small, as members of the organization. He did not advocate, as did many members, that the League be re-organized to make it work more effectively, but that nations abide by and work to fulfil the articles of the Covenant. For example, the pledge to reduce armaments (Article VIII) had not been lived up to by members. Since collective security had never been effective, he advocated that regional organizations might better fulfil the security function of the League. He also advised that the unanimity clause be revised to make this facet of the League's functioning more workable. Canadian public opinion and the Press applauded King for this initiative in international relations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), II, 36-40.

However, little concrete came out of these and other proposals, causing King to become disillusioned with the League. As Professor Eayrs commented on this change of heart; "Travel can narrow the mind."

Trouble in Europe was not Canada's sole concern between the wars. Japan and unrest in the Far East loomed rather large during the 1930's as a threat of major importance to world peace. Japanese aggression against China, and the harassment of Westerners by the Japanese armed forces led to a worsening of relations between Japan and the United States and Great Britain.

Several incidents involving Canadian citizens occurred during the late thirties. Several missionary stations clearly marked with Canadian or British flags were attacked by Japanese aircraft. In the international settlement of Shanghai, Canadians were harassed by Japanese soldiers guarding the perimeter of the compound. At times food and water supplies were either completely stopped or severely curtailed.<sup>9</sup>

In 1936, Canadian defence plans were directed towards the Pacific, and the threat of war between Japan and the United States, Japan and the British Empire, or Japan against both of these powers, as this Canadian Department of National Defence Memorandum explains:

"The deterioration in the political situation in the Far East, and the distinct possibility of war

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<sup>9</sup>W.L.M. King Papers, "Statements & Speeches", Vol. 27<sup>4</sup>, p. 231526.

breaking out in the area in the not too distant future have brought Canada, as a Pacific power, face to face with definite local responsibilities concerning defence."<sup>10</sup>

This 1935 statement continues in stronger, and more concrete terms. A fear of Japanese attack was expressed, both from air and naval forces, and the possibility of Japanese landing parties operating in strength was considered a strong possibility.

Even if Canada was to remain neutral in a war between the United States and Japan, Canadian neutrality would have to be protected. Japanese submarines could conceivably work in conjunction with surface ships and operate out of the excellent harbours along the sparsely populated coast of British Columbia to attack shipping along the west coast of the United States. If Canada could not police her shoreline, the United States could be tempted to move troops, aircraft and ships into British Columbia to curtail Japanese operations. The report also foresaw the possibility of a two-front war.<sup>11</sup>

Canadian response to this threat was to build land, sea and air forces to the level that one coast could be effectively protected, with base facilities of reasonable size on both coasts. Thus, Canada's defence posture in the late thirties included a threat from Japan at least equal to that from Europe, but in a more indirect way. Canada saw herself

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Vol 221, p. 189803.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 189810.

either in the position of an active neutral in a war between the United States and Japan, or as a passive belligerent in a war between Japan and the British Empire.

Although Japan played a major part in Canada's defence posture, the overriding security problem for Canada between the wars centered upon Germany. If any country was feared by Canada in the 1930's it was Germany and the fascist theories of its government. Between the wars the spectre of world-wide fascism was becoming more of a reality. By 1939, Italy, Germany, many of the Balkan states, Spain, Japan and Argentina had fascist or pro-German governments.

Several incidents led factions of Canadian society to believe that Naziism could spread to North America. Both Canada and the United States had sizeable Nazi Parties which were under direction from Germany, in one form or another. Naziism was viewed as a dynamic force in much the same way as a psychological fear of Communism gripped the United States and Canada in the 1950's.<sup>12</sup>

The first indicator of Canada's need to be concerned with her security, and indeed her status as an independent nation came in a book about Canada by a Canadian, Colin Ross, Zwischen U.S.A. und dem Pol. (between the U.S.A. and the Pole.) which was published in Leipzig in 1934. One of the most often quoted sections reflects directly upon the future of Canada:

"Canada is one of the very few big free spaces which

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<sup>12</sup>Watson Kirkconnell, Canada, Europe and Hitler (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1939), p. 190.

are still left on this planet. Who is to take possession of it? This questions seems to be senseless at first sight, for Canada is already in someone's possession. But we have become accustomed to the idea that there is nothing stationary, unshakable now; neither the inherited habits and forms of government, nor in the existing rights of possession."<sup>13</sup>

The book itself is a travelogue on Canada and Newfoundland, and stresses the natural wealth; minerals, forestry and farming, as well as the primitive nature of the country with its vast open spaces. The illustrations for the most part stress the primitive aspects of Canada, with the pictures showing trappers, Eskimos, Indians and poor fishermen. The strong bond between Canada and Germany is stressed in one chapter examining the German settlements in the Prairie Provinces.

Whether or not this book did contain Machiavellian intentions, in prominent anti-Nazi circles the work was taken to be an invitation to the German government to attack Canada.<sup>14</sup>

The first direct threat to Canadian sovereignty came in a series of incidents centered around Anticosti Island, a strategic island dominating the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. In 1935 the zeppelin "Hindenberg" diverged from its scheduled route from Hamburg to New York to fly up the St. Lawrence very slowly and at a low altitude, allegedly for the purpose of taking pictures of Anticosti Island.<sup>15</sup> In

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<sup>13</sup>Colin Ross, Zwischen U.S.A. und dem Pol (Leipzig: Fu. Brodhaus, 1934), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>"Hitler over Canada", Now Pub. Assoc., Vol. I, No. 1, (1939), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

1936 a group of "Dutch forestry experts" arrived on the island, where they took soundings of the harbours and an extensive aerial survey of the island. These men were later identified as German, not Dutch, and were not foresters, but experts in military construction as the following quote explains:

"Mysterious groups of German 'lumber experts' repeatedly visited Canada to investigate lumber conditions. These visitors numbered among them military men, cartographers, aviation experts and other professionals who have more to do with building naval bases than lumber."<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after, a German firm applied for the forestry rights to Anticosti Island for lumbering purposes. There was some fear at the time of German airfields or submarine bases being built in secret if these rights were granted. Under pressure, the Canadian Government delayed its decision on the matter. Thereupon, a letter arrived from Reich Marshal Goring explaining German purposes for this project, and reassuring King that nothing clandestine was being planned. (See Appendix C) King's reply was typically non-committal:

"The whole question has however come under the consideration of our government as a result of developments in other sections of Canada, and I regret therefore, that it would not be possible under these circumstances to state that no restrictions or embargo on such exports would be established in the future."<sup>17</sup>

In the meantime, Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis had

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-5.

<sup>17</sup>W.L.M.King Papers, Vol 250, p. 213713



legislation passed respecting the shipping of wood to places outside the Province of Quebec. In future, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would have to issue an annual permit for the export of forest products, (subject to inspection) effectively diminishing German interest in the project.

Reaction in the House of Commons assumed a threat from Germany in this series of moves:

"The visit of German engineers to Anticosti Island, last December was prompted by the desire to secure raw materials or to establish a military base, and one is as alarming as the other."<sup>18</sup>

Coupled with this threat was a fear of air attack from Germany. The United States Department of Defence expressed this fear in 1935, and Canada's Defence Department reasoned that if the United States was threatened, then Canada was even more vulnerable in the case of attacks by either Germany or Japan.<sup>19</sup>

Other events led to the straining of German-Canadian relations. German diplomatic communiques protesting anti-German policies and statements became rather voluminous as war approached. Perhaps the most sensitive area of contention was to do with trade policies and the German sensitivity to the boycott. In 1933 a near calamity arose in Germany, "due to a boycott of German goods in return for German reprisals against the Jews."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Canada, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), (1 April, 1938), p. 1656.

<sup>19</sup>King Papers, Vol. 221, pp. 189793-817.

<sup>20</sup>C.G. Haines, and J.M.S. Hoffman, The Origins of the Second World War (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1943), p. 349.

In September 1938 the "Trades and Labour Congress of Canada" passed a resolution to advocate the boycott of German goods. The German reply was swift, curt, and gave some indication of a threat to Canada if the boycott was not curtailed.<sup>21</sup> Other correspondence on the diplomatic level, especially in early 1939, bordered on the ludicrous. Objections to propaganda movies "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" and "I was a Captive in Nazi Germany",<sup>22</sup> articles in magazines, "Dastardly Hitler" and "Hitler is a Pansy" hardly appear worthy of diplomatic correspondence, but are illustrative of the strained relations between the two countries.

Correspondence of a more serious nature included reference to officials in government making insulting speeches about the Nazi Regime. One of these objected to strenuously was that of Dr. Manion (Leader of the Opposition) who described Hitler as a "madman".<sup>23</sup> These complaints are followed by hints of reprisal in the German press.

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<sup>21</sup>E. Windels (German Consul General) to W.L.M. King:  
 "I therefore have the honour to ask the Canadian government whether it would not be feasible to enlighten the respective Labour organizations on the harmful effects of their propaganda for Canada as well as for Germany, and to use its influence with a view to having the boycott against German goods in Canada brought to a speedy end."

King Papers, Vol. 250, pp. 213847-48.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., July 18, 1939, Vol. 282, p. 238505.

<sup>23</sup>"Here we are faced with the aspect of two madmen, Mussolini and Hitler, threatening the peace of the world... We are opposed to international gangsterism that has been manifested in the rape of Abyssinia, China, Czecho-slovakia and recently Albania."

Ibid., April 21, 1939, p. 238498.

The Canadian Government's continuing reply was to reiterate the freedom of speech and of the Press enjoyed by Canadians, and that nothing could be done to restrict these basic rights. Certainly these exchanges did not help relations between the two countries.<sup>24</sup>

As stated earlier, the spectre of an alliance of Japan, Germany and the U.S.S.R. was indicated in the defence contingencies of 1936. In light of this, it is curious that no real attempts were made to cultivate closer relations with the Soviet Union as the key to this threatening alliance.

In most of the correspondence from the pre-war era between the U.S.S.R. and Canada, the Soviets take the initiative and push for more normalized relations between the two nations. Canada desired less trade barriers between the two countries, while the Soviet Union wanted consular representation, or at least an exchange of trade missions of substantial size. It was Canada that rejected these formal overtures to normalize relations. The majority of these discussions took place as late as 1936 between the Canadian High Commissioner in Great Britain, Vincent Massey, and the Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>E. Windels to O.D. Skelton:

"Such sordid personal insults...by their constant repetition must have a poisoning effect upon the broad state of the population and finally constitute a serious danger to international relations." (Also see Appendix D)

Ibid., February 1, 1939, p. 238489.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., June 10, 1936, pp. 191871-2.

It was only after the German attack upon the Soviet Union that diplomatic missions were exchanged. The fear of communism on the domestic scene, especially in Quebec and among Ukrainian and White Russian immigrants was a factor that precluded close relations between the two countries.

Soviet friendship was not considered valuable or even necessary in Canada until after the outbreak of war. In 1939 the prime emphasis in Canadian policy centered upon the unity of the English-speaking world as a power bloc to counter the anti-commintern group (Italy, Germany and Japan) and the Comintern bloc. The underlying assumption seemed to be that the Comintern and Anti-commintern blocs would fight, and the victor would then threaten the English speaking group. Thus, the solidarity of Britain, the Commonwealth and Empire and the United States was all important.<sup>26</sup> This theory became even more important after the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939.

In the inter-war period, Canada's relations with Great Britain centered upon the drive for independent status in the eyes of the British government, as well as the rest of the world.

The first manifestation of this move came in 1919 when Canada became a signatory of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and signed the Treaty of Versailles independently of Great Britain. From this time onwards Canada was to lead the Dominions in asserting their rights as independent entities with MacKenzie King in the forefront of this

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., March 9, 1939, pp. 229408-11.

evolution towards full sovereignty.

"Under King, Canada was not only to obtain greater freedom of action, but was to win for herself complete autonomy in all matters relating to foreign policy and international relations."<sup>27</sup>

The first test of King's resolve came in 1922 when the Chanak crisis appeared to be developing into an Anglo-Turkish war. Britain asked the Dominions for support in the event of hostilities and was immediately supported by Australia and New Zealand.

Canada's reticence to commit forces was indicated in the form of a qualified refusal. Canada might send troops, but not as an automatic response to a British request. The reply was based on the view that the executive committee of the Canadian Parliament would do the bidding of the people of Canada through their appointed representatives; It was not an autocratic body to impose its will on Parliament. Canada's Parliament was to be the supreme body in deciding upon Canada's participation in foreign wars.<sup>28</sup>

In 1923, this stand was again upheld with the addition of a theory that described the relationship between the Dominions and the Mother country as somewhat similar to that of sovereign entities or a League of Nations. Foreign policy should be decided by discussion and consensus, but where the Dominions differ, that policy should not be binding.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>H.R.Hardy, MacKenzie King of Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>King Papers, "Memoranda & Notes", Vol. 60, p. C46599.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. C46607

This doctrine was fine in principle, but only evolved slowly in practice with the British Government trying to maintain the status quo, or attempting to take Dominion support for granted, with the Dominion ministers fighting to maintain an independent status, as in the case of Lausanne:

"Lausanne was only one of many issues in 1924 where British governments either ignored or misinterpreted the Canadian position in foreign affairs. He [King] insisted on the principle of Canadian autonomy on each occasion."<sup>30</sup>

The culmination of this movement came in 1931 with the Statute of Westminster giving the Dominions formal independence; A following up of the 1926 Imperial Conference at which the Dominions were granted almost total autonomy. However, the Statute of Westminster lacked precision as to whether a Dominion could remain neutral in the case of an imperial war. The King could not be at war in one capacity, (King of Great Britain) and at peace in another, (King of Canada) or so it was argued, until the Canadian Parliament passed a Statute of Westminster in 1939 declaring autonomy of action in time of war between Great Britain and any other power.<sup>31</sup>

Even then there was some question as to Canada's status in the case of an Empire war. Some doubtful areas existed which clouded the Canadian assertion of independent status. For example, it was a problem trying to maintain independence and neutral status with diplomatic functions often in the hands of the United Kingdom Foreign Service.

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<sup>30</sup>H. Blair Neatby, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>31</sup>B. Hutchinson, The Incredible Canadian (Toronto: Longman's Green & Co., 1952), p. 242

There were two other areas which tended to obscure the issues. Canada's sentimental and traditional tie to Great Britain and the strong vocal support of Britain by national and regional groups in Canada led to some misunderstanding as to the Dominion's status both overseas and in the United Kingdom. (Appendix E) If Britain were attacked, it was felt that Canada would not hesitate in her support of the Mother country out of a sentimental attachment, especially strong among the English-speaking Canadians.

"If," King said, "there were a prospect of an aggressor launching an attack on Britain, with bombers raining death on London, I have no doubt what the decision of the Canadian people and Parliament would be. We would regard it as an act of aggression, menacing freedom in all parts of the British Commonwealth."<sup>32</sup>

Even in this extreme case, however, a decision to help Britain would not be automatic, but would be made by the Canadian people and the Canadian Parliament, although there was little doubt as to what that decision would be.

The second nebulous area was that of military co-operation and the standardization of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Armed Forces. Military co-operation and standardization throughout the Empire implied that the Canadian Armed Forces were adjuncts of the British service. Uniforms, equipment, training, armaments, insignia (both of rank and nationality) and even Regimental names and marches were those of British units.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

The problem of Empire defence planning also became apparent if Canada was to take an independent stand in defence affairs. Several incidents arose where Canada had to decide between independence and close co-operation with Great Britain. In 1935, requests to train pilots for the R.A.F. in Canada were greeted with caution by MacKenzie King. The training plan that King envisioned was on a small scale, with Canadian control over the operation of the plan. The government would be glad to provide training grounds and equipment in Canada under Canadian or British instructors, but under the control of the Canadian minister of National Defence.<sup>33</sup>

The British proposal envisioned a huge training system far beyond the means of the Canadian government both in the financial burden, administration and facilities. Britain offered a large number of planes as gifts or on loan to Canada for this plan. Ian MacKenzie refused this offer on grounds of threatened sovereignty:

"If we accept a gift or loan from the United Kingdom government, will the Canadian government be justified in maintaining that Parliament will remain free to decide on the nature and extent of our actions in the event of war."<sup>34</sup>

The Air Training Plan concept gained no headway until after war was declared in 1939.

At the same time, military co-operation was close in

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<sup>33</sup>King Papers, "Statements & Speeches", Vol. 252, p. 2162<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Vol. 252, p. 2162<sup>47</sup>.



other areas. In late August 1939, when Canada should have been making every effort to remain neutral in the eyes of the world, close co-operation was evident between Canada and Great Britain. The Canadian government allowed the cruisers H.M.S. Berwick and H.M.S. York to be based on Halifax.

In the same series of dispatches, the British recommended certain types of reconnaissance aircraft and inquired as to whether the Dartmouth Naval Air Station was equipped to handle these planes. Inquiries were also sent to ascertain whether Canada had sufficient aircraft at Halifax for reconnaissance duties, and whether the same duties could be carried out by the R.C.A.F. in the West Indies.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the Canadian government requested bases in Newfoundland for reconnaissance flying boats. This interaction could certainly be construed as a unified effort to defend the Western coast of the Atlantic from future enemy actions under the assumption that both nations would co-operate in this endeavour. This was by no means a policy of the Defence Department taken in haste with the imminent threat of hostilities threatening Canada directly. It was the culmination of careful planning implicit in the theoretical base of the Imperial defence philosophy.

The Canadian Department of National Defence emphasized this philosophy in 1936 as a series of principles. These

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Vol. 272, pp. 230<sup>4</sup>41-4.

somewhat contradictory statements emphasized the political independence of the sovereign units, but the necessity for defence co-ordination in time of war committing the Empire and Commonwealth to a common military plan.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, the traditionally minded Armed Forces staff agreed with the British concepts and worked towards them perhaps at odds with the government. However, more will be said about this in Chapter two.

With the fear of war in the middle and late 1930's from both Europe and Japan, Canada's relations with the United States assumed great importance. In terms of Anglo-Canadian relations, the U.S. insistence upon the immutability of its neutrality caused Canada to become more of a force in British thinking.

In acquiring munitions, the United States Neutrality Law was stressed over and over again. No military supplies could be shipped to belligerents from the United States in the event of war. Thus, Canada assumed greater importance

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<sup>36</sup>1st. Each self-governing portion of the Empire is primarily responsible for its own local defence.

2nd. The Security of the Empire is a matter of concern to all its governments.

3rd. The military action taken at any time, peace or war, is a matter for individual decision on the part of each Empire government.

4th. In order to permit effective military co-operation between the different portions of the Empire... the following measures are recognized as being of major importance:

(a) Adequate means for the maintenance of Empire communication.

(b) Similarity in training, equipment and organization of the several armed forces of the Empire."

Ibid., Vol. 221, p. 189986.

to the Empire as a close, somewhat industrialized power to supply some of Britains needs in time of war.<sup>37</sup>

The Canadian proximity to the United States also added a measure of independence to Canada:

"One of the cardinal assumptions of any rational Canadian defence policy is that armed conflict with the U.S. would put the Dominion in an untenable defence position. It follows that Canadian adherence to imperial foreign policy can never be unqualified whenever that policy impinges on the interests of the United States."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, through geographical propinquity, Canada co-operated closely with the United States in the pre-war years. By 1936 close relations were being fostered on both sides of the border. The United States feared a conflict of interests with Japan in the North Pacific and desired closer communications with Alaska. Negotiations regulating military aircraft in overflights from the United States to Alaska began as well as discussions on the building of the Alaska Highway. Some co-operation as a belligerent or an active neutral would have been inevitable if Japan were to go to war with the United States.<sup>39</sup>

The United States also looked upon the North American continent as a unit which would have to be defended jointly in case of overseas aggression. President Roosevelt stated this policy in his now-famous speech at the opening of the Ivylea Bridge:

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 203742-6.

<sup>38</sup>"The Dominions and Imperial Defence", Round Table, Vol. 27 (April, 1937), p. 555.

<sup>39</sup>King Papers, Vol. 221, p. 234037.

"I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."<sup>40</sup>

At this juncture some form of North American solidarity was apparent, and has been documented in statements by politicians on the Northern side of the border. T.A. Crerar, before leaving to represent Canada at the 1937 Imperial Conference in London stated to the press;

"The conference will be interesting, and probably in some ways revealing; but the more I see of the whole thing, the more I am certain that our destiny is on the North American continent and that if Europe is going to insist on destroying itself, it is no part of our mission to destroy ourselves in attempting to prevent it."<sup>41</sup>

In this way, the policies of isolation in the United States and Canada closely resemble each other; Both nations desiring to remain aloof from European affairs. Canada differed in her strong traditional ties with Great Britain, but these were somewhat modified by the proximity to the United States and the distance between North America and the trouble spots of Europe. A detachment, linked with a strong moralistic approach characterized the relations of both nations towards Europe in the 1930's.

This detachment is epitomized by the Canadian reaction to the German re-occupation of the Rhineland in 1936. An editorial in the Vancouver Sun commented:

"Canada is only a spectator. There are not enough

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Vol. 277, p. 234037.

<sup>41</sup>H.L. Keenleyside, The Growth of Canadian Policies in External Affairs (Durham N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1960), p. 65.

moral principles at stake to induce her to become otherwise...Whatever morality lies in the scales seems to be, this time, on Germany's side of the balance."<sup>42</sup>

This moral approach was characterized in the early part of 1937 by the whirlwind tour of MacKenzie King through Europe. His speeches at the League of Nations and the Imperial Conference were later supported by his personal interview with Hitler, where he became even more convinced that the German Chancellor was a peaceloving, dedicated and rational leader who would not plunge Europe and the world into open conflict.<sup>43</sup> This meeting with Hitler confirmed King's policy of peaceful negotiation and dialogue in the belief that it would keep peace in Europe. This policy was explicated once again by Ernest Lapointe in May, 1938:

"What is the foreign policy of Canada? The foreign policy of Canada is to keep Canada out of the war; to try to keep Canada at peace; to be peaceful with all the countries of the world; to have those family relations...with other members of the Commonwealth."<sup>44</sup>

This policy was to continue through the worst crises in Europe almost up to the outbreak of war. The Munich crisis of September 1938 and Chamberlain's policy of appeasement was seen by King as a great step towards closer

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>43</sup>Memorandum by King, Berlin, June 29, 1937, in King Papers

<sup>44</sup>W.A. Riddell, ed. Documents on Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), p.203.

European co-operation and away from war.<sup>45</sup> Again, this stand was taken in the belief that Hitler and the Nazi Regime were reasonable and of peaceful intent. It was only with the German invasion of what was left of Czechoslovakia and the mobilization of forces along the Polish border that King realised that he had been deceived, and turned actively against Hitler.

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<sup>45</sup>W.L.M. King to Neville Chamberlain:

"The heart of Canada is rejoicing tonight at the success which crowned your unremitting efforts for peace...On the very brink of chaos, with passions flaming and armies marching, the voice of reason has found a way out of the conflict which no people in their hearts desired but none seemed able to overt. A turning point in the world's history has been reached if, as we hope, tonight's agreement means a halt to the mad race in arms and a new start in building a partnership of all peoples."<sup>4</sup>

N. Mansergh, ed. Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, 1931-52 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), I, 409.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Environment in which the Decision was made:

#### The Internal Situation

On April 1, 1938, in the House of Commons, MacKenzie King clarified the relationship between the external situation and the internal policies of Canada in the formulation of foreign policy. His comments were as follows:

"The foreign policy of Canada is based on three essentials, which are relatively simple and easy to summarize. They are first, the assertion of a distinct political status in international affairs; secondly protection from overseas powers; and thirdly economic considerations...The first guiding principle in the formulation of Canada's foreign policy should be the maintenance of the unity of Canada as a nation."<sup>1</sup>

This theme of national unity became the governing force of Canada's response to British appeals for support in Imperial adventure. The theme of national unity became the most important internal factor to be considered in pre-war years in regards to the cleavage between the dominant political cultures. King considered this point crucial as the following statement indicates; "My duty, as I see it, is to seek above all else to preserve national unity; for on the maintenance of national unity all else depends."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Debates, House of Commons, Canada, April 1, 1938, p. 1926.

<sup>2</sup>W.L.M. King, "Aggression in Hitler's Mind has no limits" Speech to the Winnipeg Board of Trade, July 10, 1941, pp. 7-8.

This split within the Canadian political, social and cultural system was always present just below the surface, becoming crucially important during times of intensified emotional stress. The cases illustrating this phenomenon that immediately come to mind are those of the North-West Rebellion (1885) with the subsequent hanging of the French-Canadian patriot, Louis Riel, and the conscription crisis of World War I.

With this troublesome political background in mind, MacKenzie King tried in the inter-war years to de-emphasize the split between the two cultures. He realized that English Canada would be more than ready to respond to any British appeal for help, but also that Quebec would violently oppose any move that could lead to conscription as Quebecois saw such policy as a move by the English-Canadians to dominate their race. This feeling was dormant until 1938 when the impending war conjured up images of a crisis such as that of World War I.

King's approach was to keep Canada as uncommitted as possible in reference to British appeals, and to repeat that conscription would not be imposed upon Canada. Especially after the Munich crisis, when it seemed as if Canada would be drawn into war, King set about uniting the nation.

"He was groping for a common ground between the two Canadian races. He was educating each in the opinions of the other. He was trying to convince Quebec, on the one hand, that war could not exempt Canada, and the English-speaking Canadians on the



other, that Quebec could not be coerced without smashing the nation and its chance for victory."<sup>3</sup>

This polarization occurred with both cultures fighting strongly for their own position after pro-war statements by King, Lapointe and Manion.<sup>4</sup> In Quebec, Premier Duplessis espoused an anti-conscriptionist campaign, and the vocal mayor of Montreal, Camille Houde, stated in February, 1939 that French-Canadian sympathies lay with Italy.<sup>5</sup>

The reaction of Quebec youth to these strong pro-war sentiments of King and Manion was immediate and strong. Both in Quebec City and Montreal, bands of French-Canadian youths staged demonstrations of protest, shouting, "No foreign wars", and "Down with Conscription",<sup>6</sup> as a prelude to what could occur if Canada did go to war, and institute conscription. Again, Mayor Houde promised to personally lead any anti-conscription movement in the Province.

For the people of Ontario, Premier "Mitch" Hepburn espoused a policy of loyalty and support for Britain in case of war. This policy did not fall short of declaring a necessity for conscription (Appendix F) which would be forced upon Quebec as well as the rest of Canada, with the accompanying fear in French Canada that this would be a

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<sup>3</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>4</sup>Canada, House of Commons, Debate, March 30-1, 1939, pp. 2409-71.

<sup>5</sup>King Papers, p. 230231.

<sup>6</sup>"Canada and the War Danger", Round Table, Vol. 29 (June, 1939), pp. 575-6.

scheme of the English to dominate their race. This may certainly have been a reason for this statement being made before there was any real need to bring up this question for Canada was not at war at the time that this statement was made.

King tried to take a middle course in an attempt to unite all Canadians behind his government in case of war. This tendency often led to a strong pro-French Canadian stance, as much of King's electoral strength lay in his large following in Quebec. Writers, however, tend to stress the idealistic nature of King's motivations as is apparent in the following analysis:

"He was convinced that the only basis for united public support of the war effort was a compromise in which, provided that there was no compulsory military service outside Canada, the minority, which did not believe that the war was Canada's war, would accept the will of the majority."<sup>7</sup>

The policy of King to moderate between the two groups fell far short of uniting the nation behind his government. French-Canadians, quite flatly, were suspicious of King's promises of no conscription, and that Canada would not be automatically committed to war if Britain was obliged to take such a course. The French-Canadian press placed little faith in King's promises. (Appendix G) The spectre of another world war fought in Europe with terrible casualties and the accompanying necessity for conscription caused the

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<sup>7</sup>J.W. Pickersgill, The MacKenzie King Record (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), I, 23.

French-Canadian press to push for a policy of purely territorial defence, and benevolent neutrality towards Great Britain. L'Action Catholique, a Quebec City paper, took a strong stand against participation, indicative of the French-Canadian Press, which argued roughly as follows:

"Canada ought to abstain from participation as long as the United States abstains; If, following the example of the United States, Canada should decide, after a referendum, to espouse the Anglo-Franco-Polish cause, our participation ought to be proportionate to our means and limited to voluntary service...We ought to remain neutral because we are first of all Canadians."<sup>8</sup>

The Montreal based paper Le Devoir augmented these statements with this presentation:

"The avowed motives of humanity, civilization, liberty and Christianity which have been put forward, are not the real war aims...The real causes being the interests of Great Britain, we ought not to participate in the war."<sup>9</sup>

Although the above statements are indicative of the type of elite protest to be found in Quebec in 1939, it would be dangerous to assume that they represented even a small majority of French-Canadians.

It is a fair assumption that most French-Canadians were opposed to conscription.<sup>10</sup> However, after the Liberal

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<sup>8</sup>King Papers, Vol. 270, p. 229124.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Results of the Plebisite over Conscription:

Province	Percent For conscription	Numbers	
		Yes	No
Maritimes	77	239,192	77,420
Quebec	28	372,094	942,130
Ontario	84	1,189,580	228,351
Prairies	76	563,436	181,569
B.C.	80	247,687	62,642
Total	64	2,613,265	1,486,771

"Toronto Daily Star" (April 28, 1942), p.1.

government's promise of no conscription supported by Mr. King, Ernest Lapointe and C.G. Power, in early 1939, it was less clear how French-Canadians would react to a declaration of war.

One author writing shortly after the end of the Second World War states that, for the most part, French-Canadians entered the war, reluctantly, but because the majority of Canadians did support participation and they accepted the will of the majority. Furthermore, they believed that the moral principles that they were being asked to fight for were "just and sound".<sup>11</sup>

Thus, this potentially explosive situation was, to a great extent, glossed over without the fear of a split between the races parallel to that of 1917.

The conscription crisis of 1917 arose during the climax of the Ontario School's Question, in which the teaching of the French language was to be limited in Ontario schools. The question exacerbated the already tense relationship between Quebec and Ontario, with the Canadian decrying attempts to stifle French outside the Province of Quebec. That great French-Canadian nationalist, Henri Bourassa, stressed the importance of the question as well as its significance in relation to Canada's war effort, as this quote illustrates:

"The whole problem of the French language and of French survival is being raised in Ontario...The

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<sup>11</sup>Hardy, op. cit., p. 200.

enemies of the French language, of French civilization in Canada are not the Boches on the shores of the Spree; but the English-Canadian anglicizers, the Orange intriguers, or Irish priests."<sup>12</sup>

Partly through these statements by French-Canadian leaders, such as Bourassa, French-Canadian enlistment in the Armed Forces lessened in Quebec. Also, the Minister of Militia (in charge of recruiting) General Sir Sam Hughes, was somewhat less than acceptable to French-Canadians; a Militarist, a Mason, an Orangeman, he was the antithesis of the French-Canadian. Hughes' chief recruiting officer in Quebec was an English, ex-Methodist Minister,<sup>13</sup> again, not an ideal choice to encourage French-Canadian enlistment.

English-Canadian dominance of the Armed Forces was felt to be a stifling factor for French-Canadians. Hughes also misunderstood the French-Canadian's heritage when he exhorted them to fight for France as the English-Canadian was fighting for Britain. In addition, few completely French-Canadian units were formed, with recruits often being placed in English-speaking units under English officers. A typical situation is that described below:

"We were commanded by English officers, in English, and it was well known that amongst those officers there were some capable of railing publicly at our recruits as 'stupid fellows' because these volunteers spoke only that unknown tongue called French...Our regiments, officered by French-Canadians were broken up overseas, our officers were humiliated and their men scattered amongst the regiments from other provinces. On all

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<sup>12</sup>Mason Wade, The French Canadians Toronto: MacMillan Co., 1956), pp. 670-1.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 709.

hands advancement and recognition of signal service were refused."<sup>14</sup>

By 1916 only 4.5% of the Armed Forces were French-Canadian out of the 40% of the population of military age. The requirements for agriculture and industry also contributed to the drop in recruitment in the army.

The subsequent falling off in recruitment in Quebec caused a reaction in the rest of Canada critical of French-Canada's response to the common effort. In Quebec City in May 1916, while troops taunted French-Canadian youths for not being in uniform, the crowd turned upon the troops throwing stones. When the French-Canadian 22me Battalion left for France, it was ignored in the English-speaking towns through which it passed.<sup>15</sup>

When conscription was instituted in 1917, partly because of the English-Canadian accusation that Quebecois were shirking their duty, violence broke out in Quebec. In Montreal, anti-conscription rallies ended in mob rampancy with guns being fired; windows broken, and cries for revolution. One meeting was broken up only after four policemen were injured and one civilian killed. The Montreal Star building was dynamited and plots were uncovered where groups were about to blow up the Montreal Gazette, the Mont Royal Club and Senator Beaubien's home.<sup>16</sup>

The violence in Montreal was mild in comparison

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<sup>14</sup>F. Roy, The Call to Arms (Quebec City: Garneau, 1918), pp. 13-4.

<sup>15</sup>Wade, op. cit., p. 671.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 747.

with that in Quebec City. Anti-draft meetings ended with the burning of the Federal Police station, and the sacking of the Chronicle and L'Evenement. One mob attacked the office of the Registrar of the Military Services Act, where the conscription records were kept.

On March 30, 1917, the Army was called in to restore order. Unfortunately, the troops sent were a Toronto Battalion, emphasizing the rift between French and English Canadians. The troops charged with fixed bayonets, and cavalry drove back rioting mobs with axe-handles. Soldiers were wounded by snipers, so the troops retaliated with rifles and machine guns, Cavalry with drawn sabres charged crowds. This action left five soldiers and four civilians dead, and 58 wounded.<sup>17</sup>

After the violence and the accompanying split within the country, the draft system was not deemed effective enough. In fact, less men were recruited under the new system than had been under the volunteer enlistment system.<sup>18</sup>

The government, after this violence, changed the leadership of the Military Service Act and modified policy to emphasize conciliation rather than coercion. By then, however, the damage had been done, and French-Canada did not forget what it felt had been injustices, as this quote illustrates:

"French Canada never forgot the troubles of 1917-

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 763-5.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 768.

18 which served to nourish a new nationalist movement which was distinctly provincial and sometimes separatist in outlook."<sup>19</sup>

As the above quote illustrates, the conscription issue lingered on after the end of hostilities in 1918. The Federal elections of 1920, 1925 and 1926 raised the conscription crisis as an anti-Conservative, pro-Liberal issue. In all of these three elections, the Conservative Party, (the architect of conscription) remained the epitome of English Canada. The party was not to gain significant support in Quebec until the 1930 election under the newly elected leader R.B. Bennett.<sup>20</sup>

In the early 1930's, with signs of war impending; Fascism growing with remarkable speed and strength, and the rearmament of the European nations, "Conscription could have become an issue in the general election of 1935. The signs were there, but with the Great Depression still holding Canada in its grasp, all other issues paled into insignificance."<sup>21</sup>

The Great Depression could be considered as one of the major factors that contributed to the isolationist views of Canadians. The government response to the economic depression was to cut spending to the bone in all Departments and Ministries of Government. This policy

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 768-9.

<sup>20</sup>J.L. Granatstein, Conscription in the Second World War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



was carried extensively into the Department of Defence\* even at a time when other countries were beginning to re-arm and increase spending on armaments. In Canada, with the depression and the viewpoints of isolationists, the Armed Forces were looked upon as a purely local defence force, only for the inshore protection of Canada, with no contingency planning for any response beyond home waters, for economic as well as ideological reasons.

One example of this tendency should suffice to illustrate government thinking. D.M. Sutherland (a Conservative M.P.) in reply to J.L. Ralston's attack of defence cuts, with specific reference to the Air Force, explained standard government policy:

"If there is any portion of the Department of National Defence the maintenance of which cannot be justified at a time when there are men, women and children having difficulty in getting enough to eat and wear, that portion must go, and when it is a part of the airforce that can be spared at this time, it must go..."<sup>22</sup>

The Depression saw the birth of the C.C.F. Party, as an extreme socialist solution to the problems of the national economic blight. This party attacked as comm-

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\*Note: In this section, many of the examples used for illustrative purposes pertain to the military. This particular institution, I think, is perhaps the best "barometer" of the sensitivity of government spending and public feeling in Canada. The first area to recieve cutbacks in time of peace or depression is the military, and the first area to be increased in time of hostility is that institution.

<sup>22</sup>Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 1932, p. 360.

unists may have been an aid to MacKenzie King in his campaign against fascism and communism, which the new left was supposed to represent. i.e. Reaction to the C.C.F. philosophy brought votes to the Liberals.<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned, the reasons for isolationism in Canada are many, but they seem to center upon the economic aspect of overseas involvement, and the theoretical or philosophical considerations surrounding Canadian policy of involvement in European affairs.

Certainly the depression era is a major cause for the introspective nature of Canadians in the 1930's. However, this is certainly not the only reason why Canada followed this policy. Other theoretical considerations are based upon the relationship of Canadian losses in the first World War, to the realization of the destructive nature of modern warfare. One such commentary describing modern warfare, very much in vogue in 1939, runs as follows:

"To-day the patriot who desires to defend his country will refuse to fight; for fighting means not the victory of one side and the defeat of the other, but the common ruin of civilization. In other words, peace-at-any-price is the only way of security or defence; patriotism and prudence and pacifism are now one and the same thing."<sup>24</sup>

Also, many pragmatic Canadians saw the national position, in terms of geography, as secure from any overseas threat. The distance factor in terms of the Atlantic and

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<sup>23</sup>Wade, op. cit., pp. 824-30.

<sup>24</sup>V. Anderson, World Currents and Canada's Course (Toronto: T. Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1937), pp. 83-4.

Pacific Oceans protected Canada from all but nuisance raids. Canada, as a trading nation, had over 50% of her trade with the United States, carried by land, and most of the rest in British ships protected by the Royal Navy. Also it was felt that only an authoritarian nation could wage modern warfare effectively, and Canada, in order to win a foreign war would have to jeopardize her democratic institutions. These authors thought it not worth the effort to "achieve a problematic democracy" in Europe at the risk of Canada's own democratic tradition.<sup>25</sup>

In French Canada, the fundamentals of isolation were based on the theory that the Saint Lawrence River Valley was the homeland of all French-Canadians, and their supreme loyalty was to that nation, not to one across the seas. One French-Canadian writer, Léon Gouin, ably sums up this nationalist point of view.

"French-Canadians are in favour of isolation in one form or another. From this it follows that we do not intend to have Canada become one of the policemen of the world...We French-Canadians are determined to remain faithful to our policy of 'Canada first'. May all Canadians realize that for us patriotism has no other meaning."<sup>26</sup>

Other authors attribute the isolationist tendencies of Canadians to a sense of geographic security, and a disinterest in international affairs because of the separation from the troublespots of Europe. One such writer, William Strange, explains the relationship between isolation and technological achievements in relation to Canada:

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-8.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-3

"Recent spectacular long-distance flights have shaken faith in Canada's geographic isolation from the more turbulent sections of the world... and the recent trans-atlantic trips, may do something to arouse and interest in international affairs which has hitherto been confined to a quite small number of thinking Canadians."<sup>27</sup>

To return to the area of economics, in relation to isolation, some comparison to the other Dominions can be made, showing that isolation is not entirely due to economic shortages. In a comparison of the defence spending of the various Dominions, presumably all with the same economic difficulties, Canada falls far behind the other.<sup>28</sup> Also, the British recognized the inadequacy in their Armed Forces even for a peacetime role, and pressured the Dominions to take over some imperial responsibilities.

"This recommendation is not, I consider really selfish from the imperial point of view, though at first sight it may appear so for we may hope, when the Australian Army reaches a reasonable standard of preparedness, that it will, in war and perhaps even in peace, relieve the British Army of some of its commitments in the Far and Middle East."<sup>29</sup>

Canada was asked in 1938 to take part in a joint air training plan, but resisted until 1939. Also the Dominion was asked to assist in the defence of the West Indies, which King refused. Doubtlessly Canada had economic prob-

<sup>27</sup>W. Strange, Canada, the Pacific and War (Toronto: T. Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1937), p. 208.

<sup>28</sup>Per Capita Defence expenditures 1931 to 1936

	Canada	Australia	N.Z.	S. Africa	Canadian Defence Budget
1931-32	1.71	2.53	1.66	2.02	17,585,000
1932-33	1.35	2.27	2.00	2.03	13,348,000
1933-34	1.24	2.40	1.50	2.20	13,149,000
1934-35	1.19	3.17	2.48	2.90	13,041,000
1935-36	1.41	4.37	2.47	3.47	15,397,000

Sir Cyril Deverall (Chief of Imperial General Staff) in King Papers, July 21, 1936

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

lems that could cause this rejection of added defence responsibility, but the same argument could have been advanced by the other Dominions. Hence, Canadian isolation had substantially more political and philosophical overtones than isolation in the other Dominions. Furthermore, King's foreign policy was rather nebulous, and non-committal.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the approach to war was a harder transition for Canadians because of this isolationist feeling fed by disorganization, political uncertainty both at home and abroad, and the memory of 1914-18.

The problems of regionalism in Ontario and Quebec have already been discussed, but it is essential to fit these provinces into a regional balance of interests in respect to Great Britain, isolationism, and pro-war sentiments characteristic of the various regions of the nation.

Canada can be divided into five regions. The first of these, and perhaps the most inward looking was Quebec, the heartland of the French-Canadian. The antithesis of Quebec was Ontario, the main stronghold of pro-British sentiments. The Maritime provinces constituted another district of strong pro-British sentiment strongly oriented towards Britain and the Imperial connection. The Prairie bloc was somewhere between these two extremes in orientation. The composition of the Prairies being mainly agrarian, largely composed of new Canadians, and reticent to the idea

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<sup>30</sup>K. McNaught, "The 1930's" in J.M.S. Careless, and R.C. Brown, ed. The Canadians (Toronto: MacMillan, 1967), p. 269.

of conscription, which had been forced upon them in World War I, tended towards indifference and isolation. The last unit, British Columbia, was strongly pro-British, but at the same time oriented towards the Pacific and the propinquity of the Japanese Empire, with Europe peripheral to their interests. William Strange aptly sums up this diversity:

"Briefly and tentatively, it might be said that French-Canada would look with askance at any attempt to use her manpower in an overseas conflict, that the people of the Maritime Provinces would serve the Empire without question, that Empire sentiment is strong in Ontario, and that the Prairie Provinces are the most likely to adopt an attitude of aloofness... It is unanimous, however, in agreeing that an attack on the shores of this country would have to be resisted tooth and nail."<sup>31</sup>

Strange qualifies this statement by adding that these are the main differences, regionally, but the whole mosaic is vastly complex and cannot account for the diversity within these regions. Also, he explains, these concepts are not static, but ever changing, to add another factor to this problem.<sup>32</sup>

Another potential cleavage in the Canadian political structure was the attitude of the four major political parties to a possible European war. The diverse nature of politics generally is such that political parties will tend to disagree on major issues, if only to create a differing

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<sup>31</sup>Strange, op. cit., p. 202

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

platform. In Canada, in 1939, this was not the case. In the Special Session of Parliament in September, all the major parties lined up behind the Prime Minister with strong pro-war platforms, although for differing reasons.

The Liberal Party, after the 1935 elections emerged with a huge majority of the seats (179) but as a divided party. One section was extremely pro-British, while the large French-Canadian element tended towards isolation. Some liberals were even against measures designed for home defence, as late as 1938.<sup>33</sup>

King set about uniting his own party behind a limited, cautious, pro-war program, with the promise of: 1. The defence of Canada first, 2. Assistance to Newfoundland and Labrador, 3. The applying of economic pressure on the enemy, 4. The control of trade, manufacturing and food to supply Britain with her needs, 5. No conscription for overseas service.<sup>34</sup> This approach united the party in support of King's pro-war stance, as well as to gather support from the majority of Canadians. The debates in the House of Commons on foreign policy in 1939 helped unite Canada behind his approach to war.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, most moderate and semi-isolationist groups

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<sup>33</sup>G.M. Carter, The British Commonwealth and International Security (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947), pp. 285-6.

<sup>34</sup>R.M. Dawson, Canada in World Affairs, 1939-41 (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1943), pp. 11-2.

<sup>35</sup>Canada, House of Commons, Debates, March 30-1, 1939, pp. 2408-75.

supported King's policies. The Liberal government gained much support from the Conservative Party under Dr. Manion. After the defeat of R.B. Bennett in 1935, the Conservatives emerged with only 38 seats, but as the leading opposition party. If anything, the conservatives were far more pro-British than the Liberal Party, and pressured for a united Commonwealth foreign policy and an increase in the navy. Many Conservatives pushed the government to institute conscription in the event of war.<sup>36</sup>

The only hindrances the Liberals encountered in dealing with the Conservatives were the extreme pro-British stands which compromised Canada's sovereignty and any chance of neutrality in an impending struggle. One such example irritated King severely:

"Whenever a Canadian representative was suggested for Washington or Japan or South America, the pointed finger was raised and the Tory cry of disloyalty to England was set up and Canada's identity remained 'zero.'"<sup>37</sup>

The position of the Social Credit (17 seats) was strongly pro-British and supported King to the hilt. This right-wing Alberta based party, although it did not delve deeply into foreign affairs, lined up squarely behind the pro-British elements in King's Party in 1939.<sup>38</sup>

The most nebulous of the major parties was the C.C.F.

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<sup>36</sup>Carter, op. cit., pp. 286-7.

<sup>37</sup>King Papers, "Memoranda & Notes", Vol. 57, p. C44808.

<sup>38</sup>Carter, op. cit., p. 286.



(8 seats) The leader of this party, J.S. Woodsworth was a devout pacifist, and led the C.C.F. until the Special Session of Parliament in September 1939, under a platform of collective security, and against re-armament in any form.<sup>39</sup> However, in 1939, Woodsworth was the only anti-war member of his party, and he stepped down as leader, after the declaration of war, in favour of M.J. Coldwell, who represented the mass of C.C.F. voters, as well as the basic philosophy of the party.

"Coldwell saw that if war resulted from the bungling of capitalists, it could not be lost without destroying all the hopes of socialism. The brave new world of the C.C.F. would be postponed indefinitely by war. Defeat would doom it for all imaginable time."<sup>40</sup>

Consequently, no large political rifts were apparent in Canada in 1939, with the exception of a few individual dissenters in the House of Commons, and in this facet of political life, Canada entered the war as a united nation.

Interest groups in Canada, unlike the actions of the Political Parties, tended to polarize their membership into extreme positions. The military interest groups epitomize this tendency with their extreme pro-British philosophy, both within the regular military establishment, and among the Legion groups across the country.

The regular military advocated strong imperial ties with the United Kingdom, and close co-operation with the

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 256.

British Armed Forces in peace as well as in war. If any group in Canada epitomized the principle, "When Britain is at war, Canada is at war," it was most strongly held by the military, above and beyond the official government position.

It was the military that first (in 1935) perceived the threat of war from the axis powers, and set about a re-armament program that would provide the nucleus for an overseas expeditionary force.<sup>41</sup> Financial restrictions, however, limited Canada's Armed Forces in acquiring the equipment needed, not only for overseas service, but also for home defence.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, defence estimates had to be cut back, even in 1938 when the government presumably was convinced of the necessity for rearmament. This is illustrated in a memorandum to King from Defence Minister Ian MacKenzie's office (January 19, 1938) after an appeal by King to cut back proposed expenditures by the government. MacKenzie replied:

"The estimates that were submitted to me by the various branches totalled thirty-eight million dollars. When, however, I was told by council that expenditures of Defence could not exceed thirty-five million I issued instructions accordingly and our estimates have been cut down to less than thirty-five million dollars."<sup>43</sup>

The regular military, however, was restrained in its outlets for expression of policies and platform. This, on

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<sup>41</sup>Department of Defence Memorandum, in King Papers, Vol. 221, pp. 189810-17.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 190004-8.

<sup>43</sup>King Papers, Vol. 253, p. 216026.

the other hand, was not true of Legion groups which expressed extreme nationalism, both vocally and violently. One incident on April 19, 1939 serves to illustrate the vehement nature of Legion activities. The "Canadian Society for German Culture" which was showing a German film (approved by the Alberta Censorship Bureau) was stormed by Legion members and ex-servicemen and forced to stop showing the films.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, the Alberta censors refused to pass German-language films due to the disorder they would cause.<sup>45</sup>

The military establishment after 1935 closely complemented the industrial and manufacturing groups within Canada. The military needed equipment, and pushed for "pilot projects" in Canada to develop the arms industry, a policy greeted with alacrity by the industrialists.<sup>46</sup> The defence industry of Canada, prior to 1939 was inadequate in all fields, and relied heavily upon private industry. Production in quantity was limited to small arms and ammunition, although insufficient for Canada's needs.<sup>47</sup>

The British government also pushed for Canada's private industry to retool for weapons production. The

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<sup>44</sup>King Papers, Vol 282, p. 238493.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 238505.

<sup>46</sup>Memorandum from Canadian Chief of Staff, Major-Gen. E.C. Ashton, January 1, 1937:

"Practically all other types of equipment can be manufactured in civilian factories and it is advisable that contracts should be let for as many types of articles as possible in order that pilot plants may be established and skill acquired. In event of a serious emergency these could be expanded to serve as models for other units."

C.P. Stacey, The Military Problems of Canada (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1940), p. 142.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

infamous Bren gun contract, by which the British and Canadian governments contracted for 7,000 Bren guns each from Canadian companies, was subject to much discussion on the public level and in Parliament as to profiteering and graft. This incident undermined the armaments buildup as well as public confidence in the general scheme for defence, necessitating action by the government.

"In regards to the proposed expenditures on defence, I should like to suggest that they might be made more palatable if accompanied by legislation for the control, both in peace and war, of profits on munitions. Demand for some form of control in this connection is certain to be widespread and emphatic."<sup>48</sup>

The tightening of contracts in Canada was accompanied by the limited amount of munitions and weapons contracts from Britain causing the Canadian manufacturers to send a delegation to Britain. One commentary predicted the failure of this trip to Britain, and the subsequent pressure that would be brought to bear upon the Canadian government.

"The Canadian manufacturers are likely to be disappointed when they learn of the small scale of the British intended orders and there will be, therefore, great pressure on the Canadian government to fulfil the British conditions by making a large range of purchases."<sup>49</sup>

Part of the impetus for any substantial increases in expenditures on the military was due to the fear of internal sabotage by dissident groups in case of war. This, if anything, helped the manufacturers retool for weapons pro-

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<sup>48</sup>Ian MacKenzie to King, in King Papers, September 29, 1936.

<sup>49</sup>King Papers, Vol. 272, p. 230363.

duction. The major fascist parties in Canada could, it was felt, have provided most of this potential force of saboteurs.

Again, comparisons with sabotage in World War I by German agents were cited as examples of what could happen in case of another war with Germany. There were attempts in that war to blow up the locks on the Welland Canal, as well as some factories and railway bridges, but only minor damage resulted. However, "today an enemy directing war against Canada from Berlin would have a much larger army of agents within the country than was available during the last war."<sup>50</sup>

Also there is some evidence supporting German attempts to tie Nazi groups in Canada to the German government. In German-Canadian schools the textbooks used were printed in Germany, and teachers were organized under a division of the Nazi Teacher's League.<sup>51</sup> Alleged close attachment between the German consular service and German-Canadian organizations was one of the charges levelled at the Nazi's, with some supportive evidence. (German Consul-General Krapp was a member of the Deutsche Bund in Kitchener: He was photographed with this group)<sup>52</sup> Other charges made center upon the pressures exerted upon German-Canadians to join Nazi groups or have their relatives in Germany suffer. One such

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<sup>50</sup>"Now" Publications, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7.

statement describing Nazi Party activity reads as follows:

"One of the main tasks is to penetrate and seize control of every German organization in Canada. This is done through threats when necessary. Members of various German-Canadian fraternal societies don't resist Nazi demands for control when they know that opposition means the concentration camp or worse for their relatives in Germany."<sup>53</sup>

Although poorly documented by this particular group, other more reliable sources do substantiate this allegation. Ian MacKenzie also received letters from German-Canadians who had pressure put upon relatives in Germany to force them to join the Canadian Nazi Party.<sup>54</sup> This type of situation caused concern within the Department of Defence, in regards to sabotage, as a study on Defence measures in February, 1939 illustrates:

"The purpose of this study is to consider only Defence Measures against aerial attacks and sabotage in the event of a World War in which the British Empire would be involved."<sup>55</sup>

This did not seem far-fetched at the time, since Nazi organizations had helped cause the downfall of Austria and Czecho-slovakia. There was also strong evidence of Nazi influence in Danzig, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria as well as large Nazi Parties in Holland and Argentina. France and Britain had small but vocal fascist groups. Nazi Party members in the United States had been convicted in connection with an espionage plot.<sup>56</sup> Given these factors, there was

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>54</sup>King Papers, Vol. 272, p. 230346.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>"Now" pub., op. cit., p. 21.

good reason to suspect Nazi motives in associating themselves closely with German-Canadian groups.

Nevertheless, within the context of this threat, plans were being worked out on a contingency basis for the internment of aliens in case of war. On March 14, 1938 the first interim report of the Committee on the treatment of aliens and alien property was instituted, and shortly thereafter a statement was issued:

"The Committee, in studying the problem referred to it, has recognized that time does not permit the working out in precise detail of schemes for the internment of enemy aliens."<sup>57</sup>

It is interesting to note that these discussions did not mention Japanese-Canadians as a perceived threat, but concentrated their attention entirely upon German and Italian aliens, clearly showing that the threat orientation was towards Europe rather than the Orient in 1938-39.

Given the vocal nature of Canada's fascists, this was to be the focus through 1938 to 1941. Adrien Arcand, Supreme Leader of the National Unity Party of Canada boasted (Feb. 22, 1938), "Then we will start the political march on Ottawa, that will end up with power for us."<sup>58</sup> Arcand also claimed 2,500 uniformed "shock-troops" among 30,000 members as the spearhead for this task.<sup>59</sup>

Watson Kirkconnell described this party as the largest and best organized of the Nazi Groups in Canada:

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<sup>57</sup>King Papers, Vol. 272, pp. 230184-5.

<sup>58</sup>"Now" Pub., op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

"... the 'Blue-Shirt' National Unity Party is the most specifically Nazi in type and affiliation. This group, which embraces both English and French, has claimed 80,000 members in Quebec and 12,000 in Ontario."<sup>60</sup>

The leaders of this Party professed a strong bond between the German Nazi Party and themselves. Adrien Arcand claimed to be a personal friend of Adolf Hitler.<sup>61</sup>

Another alarming trend was the presence of Nazis among the Militia. J.C. Farr, a fascist leader, stated that more than 300 members of the Militia in Ontario were Party members, 240 of them in Toronto. Also, "the Nationalist Party has members in the Toronto Scottish and the Queen's Own Rifles as well as in the Royal Canadian Artillery."<sup>62</sup> This statement appeared after the publication of pictures in a Toronto newspaper (June 10, 1938) showing six uniformed non-commissioned officers at a meeting in Toronto of the Nazi Party.<sup>63</sup>

Much the same sort of allocations were levelled against the Italian fascist groups, in terms of connection with Italian consular officials, and in relation to Italian-speaking schools. Some mention was also made of a Ukrainian Nazi Organization, though evidently only present in an embryonic stage.

Whatever the relation between the perceived threat

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<sup>60</sup>Kirkconnell, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>62</sup>"Now" Pub. op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.



from these groups and the actual threat, they have to be considered in respect to the total picture of public opinion in Canada in 1939.

Public opinion analysis in 1939 ranges in impression from extreme pro-war to complete apathy. The mean between these two extremities is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint accurately. Beginning with pro-war analysts, Watson Kirkconnell epitomizes this end of the spectrum. He states:

"Anglo-Canadians are thus convinced not merely of the iniquity of Nazidom and its menace to the world in general, but also of the specific impact of its ambitions on Canada and canadian democracy."<sup>64</sup>

He uses this illustration to show that 60% of Canadians were strongly behind the government and King's pro-war stance. Kirkconnell lists most of the rest of Canadian minority groups as pro-British and pro-war.<sup>65</sup>

French-Canada, Kirkconnell sees as intensely religious, tied to the clergy and to Rome. (Strong traditional tie with Italy) He does not go deeper into the French-Canadian problem, however. This general trend is continued by

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<sup>64</sup>Kirkconnell, op. cit., pp. 109-10

<sup>65</sup>Other Minorities:

	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>Stance</u>
German-Canadians	600,000	Loyal to Canada, but want neutrality in European wars.
Ukrainian-Canadians	250,000	Divided into Nationalists and Communists, all pro-Britain.
Nordic-Canadians	230,000	Solidly opposed to Nazi's highest enlistment rate in W.W.I.
Jewish-Canadians	157,000	Anti-Nazi. Strongly loyal to Great Britain.
Polish-Canadians	136,000	Strong support of Canada and Polish struggle.
Italian-Canadians	100,000	Hatred of Communism, urged neutrality.

Ibid., pp. 109-190

other groups uncertain of the French-Canadian position, as is illustrated by one analysis attempted by Round Table:

"During all this period feeling in the country (outside Quebec) has been hardening. Last September, under the immediate threat of war, there was abundant evidence of a widespread response to the call to defend the Empire and the broader call to defend our whole way of living."<sup>66</sup>

This analysis was substantiated by a synthesis of public opinion in Canadian newspapers in response to King's foreign policy statements in early 1939 (Appendix H) These papers forcefully supported King's pro-British speeches, but the majority declared that he did not go far enough in his support of Great Britain. Reaction in the Quebec Press was noted as "critical", and the commentary concluded with a description of minor demonstrations by French-Canadians in Quebec City and Montreal.<sup>67</sup>

Other articles polarized Canadians into two groups; "Imperialists" and "Nationalists". The imperialists "advocate a common Empire front in foreign affairs and accept the idea of automatic Canadian participation in an Empire war."<sup>68</sup> Nationalists, according to the same article, saw Canada in isolationist terms, and as a North American state rather than a component of the British Commonwealth.

The article added that the great majority of Canadians did not support either of these highly vocal groups, but

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<sup>66</sup>"Canada and the War Danger", op. cit., p. 583.

<sup>67</sup>"The Dominions and Imperial Defence", op. cit., p. 549.

<sup>68</sup>"Canada and the War Danger", op. cit., p. 575.

were either uninformed on international relations or bewildered by the Dominion's role in the world.<sup>69</sup> This cynical approach was carried to the extreme by one author, who described Canadian "Public Opinion" as a non-entity. His account is as follows:

"There is a prevalent illusion among the Canadian people that they are still free to make up their minds as they please concerning their relations to the next European war and that they are still uncommitted. A country, however, whose citizens are so uninformed about foreign affairs as are the citizens of Canada, and whose attitude is so habitually apathetic is liable to have its mind made up for it without being conscious of what has happened."<sup>70</sup>

However, by 1939, appeasement had been recognized as a failure, as King revealed in the House of Commons on March 20, 1939. Hitler was by this time recognized as the aggressor in international affairs, and would have to be stopped in the near future. The failure of the Munich Agreement had shown the Canadian people this.<sup>71</sup>

Public opinion probably reflected all of the above tendencies, but entered World War II partially united, with no large groups of extreme isolationists, in support of the war measures of MacKenzie King. King was certainly cognizant of this fact as the following quote illustrates:

"He realized that this minority included a high proportion, even a majority, of French-Canadians; that they had accepted the decision to go to war reluctantly and that they had done so only because

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 550.

<sup>70</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>71</sup>"Canada and the War Danger", op. cit., p. 572.

of his pledge that the government of which he was head would not resort to conscription for overseas service."<sup>72</sup>

Thus, even Quebec did not represent a hard-core of opposition to the government, but exhibited what could be described as "reluctant consent". Ontario, on the other hand, felt King's measures far too weak in their overall commitment to Great Britain. The rest of Canada, with the exception of small isolationist or purely pacifistic groups, fell somewhere between these two poles. Canada, to sum up, entered World War II, from the point of view of public opinion, united in the belief that a general European war could not exclude Canadian participation, but became disunited over the extent of that participation from a "home defence" stance to a "rally round the Empire" feeling.

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<sup>72</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 22.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Political System:

#### Structures and Decision-makers

In order to assess the decision-making process of Canadian government in 1939, it is necessary to discuss two interrelated factors: The first of these is an analysis of the political system, as well as the institutional arrangements of the political system. (The Cabinet, House of Commons, and the Senate, among others) Secondly, the platforms and interests of the major decision-makers in Canadian government will be examined. The men who have been chosen for analysis are the officials who not only held most of the executive power in the decision-making process, but who were also the closest advisors of the Prime Minister.

These two themes will be discussed in conjunction with each other rather than as separate sections since it is difficult to separate the man from the political system and discuss him, as it were, in a vacuum. Thus, the platforms and the viewpoints of these politicians and Civil Servants will be introduced in the appropriate sections of the paper dealing with their particular organ of the political system.

Implicit in this section is the idea that the role of the decision-maker is shaped by the institutional structure.

The role of the actor can be enhanced by the institutional arrangements, or inhibited by the lack of influence within the structure of government. This was especially true in the case of MacKenzie King. Institutional structures enhanced his role and power within the system making him the focal point of foreign policy decision-making. The weakness of alternative institutions within the political structure helped place more power in the hands of the Prime Minister by eliminating potential sources of opposition.

The structure of the Canadian political system in 1939, for the most part, did not differ conceptually in terms of function and power with the present day political system, except that decision-making was far less complicated in 1939.\* In light of this, the analysis of the decision to enter World War II is a much easier process than to do a comparable study of a decision made in 1960 or 1970.

Starting at the executive level of government, the first office is that of the Governor General, the Head of State. The Governor General's powers decreased as Canada gradually affirmed sovereignty from Britain. In a legal sense, by 1939 the Governor General was considered a rep-

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\*I have chosen much of the detail of government structure from H. McD. Clokie, Canadian Government and Politics Toronto: Longman's Green & Co., 1944. Clokie describes the functioning of the Canadian government in terms of the pre-war years: i.e. He sees wartime innovations in administration as somewhat transitory as in the case of World War I, and he bypasses the majority of these, giving a fairly accurate appraisal of the Canadian political system as it existed in the pre-war era.

representative of the Crown, but only with titular authority, having in fact no power in the decision-making process except to ratify decisions of the Cabinet. However, as one writer R.M. Dawson, observed, the powers of the Head of State did not decline totally into impotence:

"Authority has gradually been succeeded by influence; Obvious and aggressive leadership has been replaced by the more subtle and intangible pressure of suggestion and persuasion. For the Governor's influence on government is not negligible."<sup>1</sup>

The Governor General acted upon the advice of the Canadian Privy Council, a body including active members of the Cabinet under a President. In 1939, the Prime Minister occupied this position, which helped curb the power of this body in terms of opposition to government policy. In this way, the Governor General assumed a formal, but minor, position in the formulating of policy, while the Prime Minister became the focal point of decision-making.

The functioning of the executive was blurred by the fact that MacKenzie King filled a number of roles in the political structure. His acting as President of the Privy Council, Secretary of State for External Affairs, as well as serving as Prime Minister may have streamlined the decision-making procedure, but it also confused the power relationship in the executive.<sup>2</sup> King played upon this imprecision and took a Machiavellian pleasure in his complete

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<sup>1</sup>R.M. Dawson, The Government of Canada (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1946), p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 6.

dominance over the Cabinet, as Bruce Hutchinson explains:

"Even the solidarity of his Cabinets was a charade which kept the chief actor perpetually amused. He encouraged the feuds of his Ministers because their divisions strengthened him. Often he disagreed with policies executed in his name, denouncing them indignantly in private, and was always chuckling at the Opposition's failure to see his colleagues obvious blunders."<sup>3</sup>

The above description is a fairly good appraisal of the type of power and influence wielded by King, over the Cabinet, and in the administration of government policies.

MacKenzie King saw the Cabinet as a body of advisors as much as a policy formation center. He expressed this opinion at various times during his administration. The following quote is a typical example:

"How best any action of mine may serve to maintain that unity is something of which I, alone, can be the judge. That is a responsibility of which attaches to the head of state of an administration at any time, but doubly so at a time when the nation is at war."<sup>4</sup>

King saw his position, clearly, as one of immense power, especially in the area of foreign policy. He conducted foreign policy stealthily and possessively, and few of his staff or Cabinet Ministers were able to clarify policy during times of crisis.<sup>5</sup> This, on the other hand, is not to imply that King ignored his Cabinet and made

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<sup>3</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>King, "Aggression in Hitler's Mind had no limits", op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>H.L. Keenleyside, The Growth of Canadian Policies in External Affairs (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 59-60



decisions completely on his own. The standard procedure adopted at Cabinet meetings involved a general airing of views by each member interested or involved in a certain decision, followed by a discussion, with King leading, steering the Cabinet towards his point of view. As one writer commented on the value of this type of format:

"...only very rarely did he insist on getting his own way when a clear majority of his colleagues dissented. He was wise enough to realize that opposition from his colleagues usually reflected the opposition to be expected from the public, and he did not believe in sailing right into formidable opposition if it could be avoided. Yet, while he did not intimidate his colleagues, he certainly dominated the Cabinet."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, a consensus was reached, with King's opinion usually being adopted with modifications as the policy of the government. Due to the principle of Cabinet solidarity, little is known about these discussions, and how members of Cabinet were forced to follow King's policies.

Much, nevertheless, can be surmized about King's approach to government and his ability to predominate his Cabinet, from an analysis of his views on government and power, as well as by a study of his character and abilities. King, as one author states, was an extreme pragmatist who could actually perceive a demand from the people before it could be articulated. It was upon this "sixth sense" that King rose to power and built his government.<sup>7</sup> He was a canny

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<sup>6</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>C. Ondaatje, and R. Catherwood, The Prime Ministers of Canada (Toronto: Canyon Press, 1967), p. 104.

politician, with a remarkable resilience as his mercuric career indicates.

After the 1921 and 1925 elections King had to work with minority governments and the tenuous support of the agrarian based Progressive Party, a situation he handled extremely well. In 1926, a scandal revealed a corrupt Custom's Department engaged in the illegal trade of liquor between Canada and the United States. The King government was able to keep this crisis under control. The Beauharnois Scandal of 1931, where the Liberals were charged with accepting a bribe of \$700,000 from the Beauharnois Power Company in return for concessions along the St. Lawrence River, was also managed by the Party.

Perhaps King's most serious mistake in international affairs was to misjudge both Hitler and the power of the appeasement policy adopted by the Canadian government. Again, King was able to weather the change in attitude from extreme isolation to belligerence. (This feat was not accomplished by the British leader Neville Chamberlain) Mr. King's handling of the Conscription Crises from 1939 to 1944 was just as masterly performed.

The controlling of the above mentioned crises was mainly due to the power possessed by the Prime Minister, and his ability to make fast effective decisions. This was especially true in the case of foreign policy determination as the following evaluation demonstrates:

"...he appears to have made many foreign policy

decisions himself and to have consulted cabinet colleagues and departmental officials only when he thought it necessary. With the exception of the few months prior to his retirement, Mr. King kept the External Affairs portfolio and the ultimate power of making foreign policies clearly to himself."<sup>8</sup>

This power of unilateral decision-making is described in some detail by a former secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. James Gibson. Gibson illustrates King's propensity to make quick decisions, perhaps in many cases without much forethought:

"Much of Canadian foreign policy, especially during World War II, was written in marginal notes with a blunt pencil. A blunt pencil is not the ordinary instrument of sustained thought or extended writing; it is the agency of the moment and of on-the-spot decisions."<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Gibson cites several examples of the King penchance for this type of decision-making. One instance used by this author centered upon the status of Canadian diplomatic missions, especially in Washington and Moscow. (Both Legations in the early war period) A note from the Department of External Affairs asking whether it would be appropriate to raise the status of the Washington Legation to that of an Embassy was delivered to King. It was almost immediately initialled by that above-mentioned blunt pencil, "Yes, At once, The sooner the better."<sup>10</sup> Within a few months (under

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<sup>8</sup>R.B. Farrell, The Making of Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. James Gibson, "MacKenzie King's Blunt Pencil", Ottawa Journal, June 14, 1952., p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

King's initiative) the United States, Soviet, Brazilian, Argentine and Chinese Legations were raised to Embassies.

This tendency of MacKenzie King was not just a policy formulated under the pressure of a war-time administration. Deliberations were made in the pre-war years in much the same manner as described above. One particular instance involved the repatriation of the Canadian "MacKenzie-Papineau" Brigade from Spain after the collapse of the Spanish government. O.D. Skelton sent a memorandum to King outlining the possible solutions to the above-mentioned problem. Skelton's suggestion was answered by the cryptic comment, "I approve", from King, and the program was carried out.<sup>11</sup>

King tried, at some length, to relate his power position to a direct mandate received from the people, which he used to justify his utilization of maximum authority in government and negate the fact that he was directly responsible to Parliament, not to the people, for the power he exercised in conjunction with his Cabinet.

"My power comes from the people...It does not arise from any 'superman' power that I possess...I felt that I had that power by being true to the people and to the promises I had given them. I did not think it was a mark of leadership to try to make people do what one wanted them to do."<sup>12</sup>

King's position as leader of the Cabinet also enhanced his decision-making powers. He appointed or selected members from among his closer advisors as the Heads of the various

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<sup>11</sup>External Affairs, Monthly Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs, Vol. XXIII, (February, 1971), p. 57.

<sup>12</sup>King Diary, cited in Ondaatje, op. cit., p. 104.

government departments. These men were chosen for political reasons rather than administrative ability or special knowledge and the actual administration of the departments remained in the hands of senior civil servants. This policy was considered less dangerous to a Ministry except in time of war. In this contingency, for example, Defence Minister Ian MacKenzie was replaced by Norman Rogers, a man more adept at administration than was the former.<sup>13</sup>

In the Cabinet, French-Canada was amply represented both by Ministers from Quebec and Ministers considered by Quebecois as Francophone. The chief issue for these Cabinet Ministers in the pre-war years was conscription. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet were trusted implicitly by most Quebecois when they promised no conscription. Le Soleil, a Quebec City paper ran such frontpage headlines as:

"That which Sir Wilfred Laurier in opposition was unable to do, King and Lapointe in power have accomplished.' Then large sub-titles: '1917 Laurier combats conscription. 1939 King, Lapointe, Cardin, Power and Dandurand, save us from conscription.'<sup>14</sup>

Chief of the above mentioned Ministers was Ernest Lapointe; Secretary of State, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, the closest of King's colleagues except for O.D. Skelton, and a man who enjoyed tremendous power, respect and influence in Quebec as well as in Ottawa. He was chosen by King in 1922 as his French-Canadian "partner".

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<sup>13</sup>Norman Ward, ed. The Memoirs of Chubby Power (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1966), p. 182.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

"Already King had chosen Lapointe as his permanent French-Canadian partner and now stowed him away in Fisheries, pending Gouin's retirement. The King-Lapointe coalition, like that of Baldwin and Lafontaine, of MacDonald and Cartier, Laurier and Fielding, was destined to be long and fruitful."<sup>15</sup>

King was unable to understand French-Canada or even to speak French, and depended heavily upon Lapointe both to interpret the feeling of Quebec, politically, and to look out for the Party's interests in that Province. In the Riddell incident of 1935, Lapointe, in King's absence, at first supported the League sanctions on Italy introduced by Riddell. Under pressure from public opinion in Quebec, the French-speaking press, and under attack by French-Canadian political leaders, Lapointe revised his position and repudiated Riddell in Geneva.<sup>16</sup>

Lapointe was heartily opposed to conscription, not for King's reasons of "national unity", but because he felt that no government had the moral right to impose such legislation upon a free people and that every man would have to choose for himself whether or not he would go to war. Lapointe also saw that neutrality in a European war could not be a viable policy for Canada. The vast majority of people would favour belligerence on the side of Great Britain, and Quebec was not strong enough to alter this decision alone. Neutrality would be almost impossible

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<sup>15</sup>Bruce Hutchinson, Mr. Prime Minister (Toronto: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1964), p. 213.

<sup>16</sup>G. Donaldson, Fifteen Men (Toronto: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 246-8.

without countenancing the risk of a civil war.<sup>17</sup>

For both of the above reasons, Lapointe pushed for active participation in World War II, short of conscription, a policy similar to that of King, but for differing reasons. King reasoned that national unity, above all else, had to be maintained, while Lapointe took a more parochial view, strictly mirroring French-Canada, and the individual rights of the Canadien. In fact, it was Lapointe rather than King, who delivered the emotional "call to arms" in Parliament on September 9, 1939 in one of the finest pronouncements ever delivered by a Canadian patriot:

"God give Canadians the light which will indicate to them where their duty lies in this hour of trial, so that our children and our children's children may inherit a land where freedom and peace shall prevail, where our social, political and religious institutions may be secure, and from which the tyrannical doctrines of Nazism and communism are forever banished. Yes, God bless Canada. God bless our Queen. God bless our King."<sup>18</sup>

Almost synonymous with Lapointe in the minds of the people was the other Liberal defender of Quebec, C.P. Power. (a war hero, an Irish-Canadian from Montreal, trusted implicitly by French-Canadians) Their views were linked so closely that almost invariably their names were linked in terms of policy statements in support of French-Canadian interests. Power also served as a link between the two dominant cultures of Canada; An interpreter of French

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<sup>17</sup>Canada, House of Commons, Debates, March 31, 1939, pp. 2466-8.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., September 9, 1939, p. 69.

Canada to the English-Canadian populace.<sup>19</sup>

Power deplored conscription as did Lapointe and King. Power's view, however, was anti-militarist and pacifistic rather than moralistic or politically minded. As Power stated in 1937; "With regard to war, I went overseas in one war. I returned. I'll never go back, and I'll never send anyone else."<sup>20</sup> Power maintained a close relationship with King, but was regarded as somewhat reckless. He never enjoyed the respect or confidence of King that Lapointe attained, but was held in high regard due to his political "flair" that King thought was unique in his Cabinet.<sup>21</sup> After King's decision to replace MacKenzie as Defence Minister, Power was the prime candidate until he pointed out that having the Defence Minister from Quebec might raise the issue of conscription again, thereby destroying his chance to become Defence Minister himself. Power's administrative ability was excellent, his oratory, wit and popularity with the voters made him one of the most influential men in the Cabinet.<sup>22</sup>

All three of these leaders, King, Lapointe and Power agreed on the Canadian approach to World War II. There would be no thought of neutrality in the coming struggle, and a commitment to Quebec promising no conscription.

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<sup>19</sup>Hutchinson, The Incredible Canadian, op. cit., p. 272.

<sup>20</sup>Ward, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>21</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Hutchinson, Mr. Prime Minister, op. cit., p. 215.



Again, King came to these conclusions through a political policy advocating national unity; Lapointe through a reflection of the views of Quebecois, and Power through an emotional, personal approach, reluctantly accepting the fact that Canada could not remain neutral in a European war.

In opposition to this triumverate was Colonel J.L. Ralston, destined to resign when conscription was not introduced at his request in 1944. He was a man of immense ability and character, respected by King, but with views on conscription juxtaposed to those of his leader.<sup>23</sup> Ralston became the unofficial leader of the English-Canadian segment of the Cabinet, and was seen by King as a possible successor.<sup>24</sup>

However, Ralston's views did not have much effect upon the 1939 decisions, since he rejoined the Cabinet on September 6, 1939 at the height of the war participation deliberations, after an absence of four years. The Cabinet had already met and decided upon belligerence, but to bring this pro-war, pro-conscription, English Canadian into the Cabinet at this particular point, certainly helped sway English Canadians toward King and away from the Conservatives.

From his first Cabinet meeting on September 7, 1939, Ralston favoured a large expeditionary force, as well as conscription, a position reflected by a number of English-

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<sup>23</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>24</sup>King Diary, cited in Pickersgill, pp. 25-6

Canadian ministers.<sup>25</sup> Ralston did much to hasten the sending of the 1st Canadian Division to England in 1939, and helped polarize the Cabinet into the "limited war" faction of King, Lapointe and Power, and the "total war" group under his leadership.

Among this "total war" group was C.D. Howe, who was to rise in prominence during the war years and afterwards. It was he who was credited with building the vast Canadian armaments industry that by 1941 was capable of producing all the equipment needed for a full infantry division every six weeks.<sup>26</sup> It was in this area that Howe was especially competent, even before the war.

Perhaps Howe's greatest triumph in the pre-war years was his defence of the government over the controversial Bren gun contract. In 1938, the government was charged by the Opposition with favouritism, laxity in the upper levels of the Department of National Defence, and profiteering, in the awarding of a contract for the manufacture of twelve thousand Bren machine guns to the John Inglis Co. of Toronto. Howe's performance in support of government policy was masterful, as one author indicated:

"C.D. Howe was not directly involved in the Bren contract. Nevertheless, in a House debate conducted almost entirely on an emotional level, the Minister of Transport was to make the most lucid, concise and

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-9.

<sup>26</sup>Donaldson, op. cit., p. 157.

best informed contribution to come from the government front bench during the long and heated fight over the Davis Report."<sup>27</sup>

Howe's initiatives led to the establishment of a Defence Purchasing Board to eliminate profiteering on war contracts. His able defence of the Bren gun Contract gave Canada an operating machine gun plant six months before war broke out. It was from that date that Howe became Minister of Munitions and Supply, and industry started the transition from peace to war production due to his handling of the Bren gun controversy and his initiatives in organization.

Howe's views on conscription of manpower closely paralleled his policy of total conscription of all the wealth and power of the nation for war purposes. Manpower was a component part of those resources. If a war had to be fought, it should be fought with all the resources of the nation at the disposal of the administration, and ended as soon as possible. Although King did not agree with Howe's views on conscription, he needed this man for his organizational ability, and managed to modify Howe's views until conscription became an absolute necessity in 1944.

One other Minister prominent in the immediate pre-war period was Ian MacKenzie, the personable Minister of National Defence until September 8, 1939. MacKenzie had exceptional popularity with the public, he was loyal in the extreme to King, he had unequalled knowledge of Parliamentary

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<sup>27</sup>Roberts, op. cit., p. 54.

procedure, and "volcanic energy" in debate.<sup>28</sup> MacKenzie had, nevertheless, made several important mistakes in King's pre-war administration. He was not able to adequately defend the Ministry of National Defence in the Bren gun contract controversy, causing the government considerable trouble until rescued by C.D. Howe.

Since MacKenzie was hampered in the pre-war years by a lack of funds, it was inevitable that Canada entered the war poorly prepared. Even as late as 1938, when the Defence Minister pushed for larger expenditures for rearmament, pressure was still being exerted upon King to lower spending, as this letter from King to MacKenzie indicates:

"The present administration can make it clear to the people of Canada that it has, above all else, been cautious and prudent in all things, not only will its action be strongly approved by the citizens of Canada, but the position of Canada...will become more enviable than ever. A surplus of receipts over expenditures and reduction in taxation are necessary to make this position apparent."<sup>29</sup>

The final decision to replace MacKenzie, nevertheless, came on September 15, 1939, when he delivered a speech defending his performance in the pre-war years to the Cabinet which was described as "pathetic" by King.<sup>30</sup> MacKenzie's performance in the pre-war years was adequate, but would

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<sup>28</sup>Hutchinson, The Incredible Canadian, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>29</sup>King Papers, January 12, 1938, Vol. 253, pp. 216023-4.

<sup>30</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 26. For a copy of this report: King Papers, Vol. 272, pp. 230556-63.

obviously not be spectacular under the stress of wartime expansion of the responsibilities of this vital Ministry. Thus, MacKenzie was gazetted into the Department of Pensions and National Health for the war years.

By late 1939, as one author states, King had formed a team which made his other administrations look mediocre by contrast. It was perhaps the strongest, most dynamic and capable Ministry in modern Canadian history.<sup>31</sup> Several of the members were of leadership calibre, (Rogers, Balston and Dunning) many had great personal appeal, (Lapointe, Power and MacKenzie) while others possessed great intellectual and administrative ability. (Howe, Gardiner and Cardin) Perhaps the only cohesive factor which blended these powerful figures into a team was the power of their leader. King was respected by all these men, and he used their divisions to strengthen his own position, and keep potential rivals arguing among themselves.<sup>32</sup>

The Cabinet, in Canadian experience, has varied in size from over twenty members to less than ten. MacKenzie King's Cabinet in 1939 consisted of only sixteen members, a small Cabinet, (Appendix J) more easily controlled than one of over twenty members. The Cabinet was formed, traditionally, on a Federal, regional and racial basis, (although somewhat heavy with Quebec members) with heterogeneity

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<sup>31</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 9

of interests allowing for more of an arbitration role for the Prime Minister.

The duties of the Cabinet were to direct and dissect public opinion, to maintain the party organization, to manage Parliament, and to supervise the details of government. The primary function of this body was to determine the major lines of policy to be followed by the government.<sup>33</sup> It was also the exclusive privilege of Cabinet to introduce financial resolutions to the House of Commons. R.M. Dawson has summed up the powers of Cabinet precisely and in detail:

"The Cabinet links together the Governor-General and the Parliament. It is, for virtually all purposes, the real executive...The Cabinet is the servant of the Governor, yet in practice it tells him what to do; it is also the servant of the House of Commons, yet it leads and directs the House and is in a very real sense the master of that chamber."<sup>34</sup>

The basic authority of Cabinet rested upon the support of the House of Commons. "The characteristic principle of Cabinet government is that the chief active heads should be in harmony with the House of Commons."<sup>35</sup> The government party, the majority in the House of Commons, was expected, upon request, to vote in support of the Cabinet and its policies, and generally to "support" the government. As H.McD. Clokie illustrates:

"Supporting' the government implies the passing of such legislation as is required for carrying out the administrative policy, approving financial measures required for the various services, and voting generally in defence of the Cabinet when it is attacked in a

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<sup>33</sup>Clokie, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>34</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>35</sup>Clokie, op. cit., p. 131.

partisan manner."<sup>36</sup>

Solidarity of the party in Canada rested upon a bond of personal loyalty to the leader, the authority of the party caucus, as well as potential material losses incurred by insurgency. This is, however, not to say that the House was considered a "rubber stamp" for all the policies of Cabinet. Although in the 1935-39 period the opposition parties were small, they still effectively fulfilled their role of criticism of government policy, and brought public issues into the forefront of Parliamentary debate. Although the initiative in terms of policy making was held by Cabinet, concurrence of the Governor General, the Senate and the House of Commons was necessary for Bills to be approved. "The concurrence of each is formally necessary for every legislative act...There need be no doubt that the House of Commons is the real center of Parliamentary authority."<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to the above quotation, the tendency towards more Cabinet authority is evident as a war-time and post-war trend in Canadian politics, with the two distinct roles of the pre-war years (Executive and Legislative) being more closely drawn together, as R.M. Dawson illustrates:

"In Canada, where the Cabinet sits in Parliament and must be responsible to it, the co-operation between the two naturally goes much further and begins to approach the point where the one becomes merged in

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

the other. From this develops a constant and no doubt an inevitable tendency for the Cabinet to push the House of Commons into the background and make the latter an approving and checking body which on only the rarest occasions will assert a genuine independence of its leader."<sup>38</sup>

Another factor which gave power to the House in the pre-war years was the fluctuation in Cabinet due to re-organization. The implimentation of the Haldane Report of 1919 classifying services under ten different categories was still incomplete in 1939.<sup>39</sup> This certainly, in terms of organization in the Cabinet, could well have temporarily enhanced the power of the House of Commons in the pre-war years.

The House of Commons, according to R.M. Dawson, is the "grand inquest of the nation", and it derives its power from being the only body which can withhold approval of government policy, and because it is a body of representative character for the nation:

"It forms the indispensable part of the legislature; and it is the body to which at all times the executive must turn for justification and approval."<sup>40</sup>

MacKenzie King in the years before the war was often faced with strong opposition, but managed to persuade his party to support measures deemed by Cabinet to be for the

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<sup>38</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 232

<sup>39</sup>The Ten Areas of the Haldane Report: 1. Prime Minister and External Affairs, 2. Secretary of State, 3. Justice, 4. Finance, 5. Interior, 6. Defence, 7. Communications and Transport, 8. Production and Distribution, 9. Labour, and 10. Public Works.

Clokier, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>40</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 357.



good of the nation. King was a great believer in the party caucus. Although policy was not made in these sessions, (held weekly) Members were encouraged to attack or criticize Party policies. King usually gave the members reasons for particular policies and why they should support these decisions of the Cabinet. Indirect criticism of various departments by Members brought changes that King might otherwise have had to push for himself.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the outstanding example of this complex problem of party support was the Defence Appropriations debate of 1937. Rearmament was strongly criticized by both Cabinet, the Party caucus and Parliament, and King was forced to reduce defence estimates from fifty to thirty-five million dollars. This reduction was forced within the Cabinet as a reflection of both Parliamentary and public opinion on defence spending. Even then, the estimates came under severe criticism in Parliament, as the following quote illustrates:

"When the reduced estimates reached the House, the Government discovered that a majority of its own supporters opposed them, a few openly, the remainder privately. So hostile was the feeling that the Prime Minister summoned a special caucus, and is said to have told his followers that they would have to vote for his estimates or accept the consequences."<sup>42</sup>

While party solidarity was at times precariously maintained, it solidified as a consciousness of the threat

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<sup>41</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>42</sup>"The Dominions and Imperial Defence", op. cit., p. 547.

from Europe was realized in the period after the Munich "settlement".<sup>43</sup> This problem was due in part to an ignorance on the part of the House as to details of foreign policy, since Cabinet did not reveal much information as to the nature of the international situation to either Parliament or the public.<sup>44</sup>

MacKenzie King often used the slogan "Parliament will decide", but made most important decisions by order-in-council without prior Parliamentary approval. He used the argument that Parliament was not versed in the technical knowledge needed to make complicated decisions, or that discussion in Parliament might upset delicate negotiations jeopardizing the future of Canada.<sup>45</sup>

The relationship of foreign policy to Parliament is the topic of an excellent article by Kenneth McNaught in which King's approach to the subject is explained:

"The Principle of parliamentary control of foreign policy was automatically accepted from the time of confederation, and in later years 'became a veritable dogma.' One recalls, also, the not infrequent assertions of the late W.L. MacKenzie King that in major foreign policy commitments parliament would decide."<sup>46</sup>

McNaught concludes by stating that if "dogma" implies providing Parliament with comparatively full information and debate prior to major decisions being made as the criteria by which the policy is to be measured, then that "dogma" is a myth. But if the decision of the government

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<sup>43</sup>"Canada and the War Danger", op. cit., pp. 570-83.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 570.

<sup>45</sup>James Eayrs, The Art of the Possible (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 107-8.

<sup>46</sup>K. McNaught, "Parliamentary Control of Foreign Policy?" International Journal, (Autumn, 1956), p. 251.

reflects the expression of parliamentary opinion, then the "dogma" is more reasonable.<sup>47</sup>

This trend continued until by 1939 the functions of the House of Commons in regards to criticism and the airing of public views in international affairs had been all but abrogated, with the overriding issue of the European war and the nature of Canadian participation becoming the chief concern of the House of Commons, still with no clear-cut decision by the Cabinet.

The strong support of the government in respect to the war, by the Conservative Party, the Social Credit movement and most of the C.C.F. members, as well as the majority of the Liberal members all but stifled any anti-war sentiments from being expressed in the House of Commons. Only a few members of the House actually spoke against war during the Special Session of Parliament in September 1939, illustrating the almost unanimous support given to the Cabinet by the House.

The Upper House of Parliament, the Senate, took a back-seat role in the affairs of government decision-making with little power or influence in this area, especially in external affairs:

"The Senate has, therefore, nothing to do with the operation of the primary principle of ministerial responsibility. Usually, however, there is one Senator in the Cabinet, a minister without portfolio, whose duty is to act as the government leader in the Senate."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>48</sup>Clokie, op. cit., p. 118.

In the King Cabinet, Senator Dandurand ably represented the views of the Senate, as well as to fulfil the task of explaining governmental policy to that body. M. Dandurand also, on occasion, represented the government at international conferences.

MacKenzie King had great respect for this leader who had supported him since his first administration in 1921 with unquestionable loyalty. He was a valued member of the administration, although he often held views at odds with his chief. It was Dandurand who delivered the famous "fire-proof house" speech to the League of Nations and continued to hold isolationist views in the 1930's.<sup>49</sup>

The power of the Senate was such that some influence could be exerted upon the government, mainly through Dandurand, and the respect he commanded in the Cabinet as well as in Quebec. The Senate did not have the power to reject bills, but could, and frequently did, amend such legislation.<sup>50</sup> The Senate also had the power to promulgate limited legislation in the form of private bills.<sup>51</sup> One other important power of the Senate is aptly summed up by Senator Dandurand:

"Le rôle politique du Sénat est assez faible chez nous, surtout si on le compare aux Sénats américain ou français. Les rares occasions qui lui ont été offertes de se prononcer à l'encontre des communes...

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<sup>49</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>50</sup>Government of Canada, Senate Journals, 1918, pp. 193-203.

<sup>51</sup>Dawson, op. cit., pp. 348-9.

On répète sans cesse que le rôle du Sénat est de protéger les minorités et de défendre les droits des provinces."<sup>52</sup>

Senators, however, were partisan politicians; "with but one or two possible exceptions, every new appointment has been made by the Prime Minister of the day from among his political supporters."<sup>53</sup>

Because of the influence of Party allegiance upon Senate membership, governments stocked this body with their supporters, and after extended periods in office completely dominated this body. The Senate also realized that "its continual existence is dependent upon avoidance of a serious clash with a determined government."<sup>54</sup> Consequently, when the decision to enter World War II had to be made, no opposition came from the Senate, both because of the strong determination of the government to go to war, and because the Senate was packed with Liberal supporters, and a minority of pro-war Conservatives who were certainly not averse to supporting the government pro-war stance. Thus, when the time came for the decision to enter World War II, the Senate followed the example of the House of Commons and supported the government in its decision.<sup>55</sup>

Part of the problem of the lack of information, both

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<sup>52</sup>M. Hamlin, ed. Les Mémoires du Sénateur Raoul Dandurand (Québec City: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1967), pp. 232-3.

<sup>53</sup>Clokier, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>55</sup>"Canada and the War Danger", op. cit., p. 582.

in the House of Commons and the Senate, on external affairs, stems from the guarded attitude of MacKenzie King towards Canadian foreign policy formulation. He preferred to work in secret, and maintained little contact with his Ministers in the field of foreign relations.<sup>56</sup> One example of this policy reads as follows:

"No Cabinet colleague accompanied MacKenzie King on his visit to Hitler in the summer of 1937, and none could therefore challenge with an authority based on comparable experience and grievously inappropriate notions of Nazi policy and leadership that their Prime Minister has acquired on this mission."<sup>57</sup>

This was, however, the generally accepted practice,<sup>58</sup> and it was not until 1946 that a bill was introduced in the House of Commons to separate the Prime Minister from the External Affairs portfolio. Suggestions were made, at various times before the war to separate these two functions, but King continued to refuse this separation. (Appendix I)

In 1939 the Department of External Affairs operated

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<sup>56</sup>Eayrs, op. cit., pp. 10-2

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> "In 1912, an amending act was passed placing the Department directly under the Prime Minister instead of the Secretary of State, and from April 1 of that year the Prime Minister held the additional portfolio of Secretary of State for External Affairs. The appointment of a separate minister for the Department was considered from time to time, but no action was taken until March 1946, when a bill was introduced to repeal the section of the act of 1912 that provided that the Prime Minister was to be the Secretary of State for External Affairs."

Government of Canada, Department of External Affairs, Reference Papers, (January, 1969), No. 69, p. 1.

with a very small staff, and only a few stations.<sup>59</sup> However, in the Department of External Affairs, the Under-Secretary had a relatively more enhanced position than did his opposite numbers in other government departments, as this quote portrays:

"The Prime Minister in Canada is, ex-officio, the Minister for External Relations...in the Dominion it is an accepted practice that the Premier should fulfil the double duty of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. For this reason the Deputy Minister for External Relations occupies a particularly important position in the Civil Service."<sup>60</sup>

This author continues by comparing the power of the Department in terms of the shaping of policy in the external field. He explains that the Department has more influence in terms of policy-making because it is more concerned with questions of foreign policy than administration, implying that whereas in other Departments, the power relationship starts at the apex and works downward through the mechanism of the Department, while in the Department of External Affairs policy more often comes from the lower levels and works up towards the apex. He qualifies this statement by stating that this trend is fairly accurate,

<sup>59</sup>Canadian Diplomatic Representation to 1939

Washington	1927	Geneva	1925 (Permanent Representative to the League of Nations)
Paris	1928		
Tokyo	1929		
Belgium	1939	Total staff in 1939:	32 officers.
Netherlands	1939		

F.H. Soward, "The Department of External Affairs and Canadian Autonomy", Canadian Historical Association, No. 7, 1965, pp. 12-5.

<sup>60</sup>D. Marsh, Democracy at Work (Toronto: MacMillan Co., 1938), p. 42.

but within the bounds set down as government policy by Cabinet, and especially by the Prime Minister:

"...the making of ultimate decisions on foreign policy during the King administration was sometimes a unilateral act. But it is still important to stress that before such ultimate decisions were made by Mr. King, officials of the Department of External Affairs drew some of the problems to his attention, suggested policies or alternative courses of action, and then made some of the subsidiary decisions that followed from the policy determined by the Prime Minister."<sup>61</sup>

Foreign service personnel were expected to carry out the policy of whatever government was in power, irrespective of personal beliefs, in terms of overall policy.<sup>62</sup> Continuity of action, however, was lost in the pre-war years, because the top level of diplomats were also susceptible to the changes in domestic politics.

"A change of government nearly always meant, as it did in the United States diplomatic service, the automatic submission by the head of the mission of his resignation...The High Commissioner had been, in all essentials, simply the personal representative of the Prime Minister."<sup>63</sup>

The head diplomatic service personnel in Ottawa were mainly connected with an advisory role, similar in many ways to the system of the United Kingdom. The role, however, was quite important as time did not allow the Prime Minister to supervise closely the routine work of foreign

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<sup>61</sup>Farrell, op. cit., pp. 11-2.

<sup>62</sup>Marsh, op. cit., pp. 42-4.

<sup>63</sup>Vincent Massey, What's Past is Prologue (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1963), p. 225.



policy implementation. This was an area supervised by the permanent officials of the Department, chief of which was O.D. Skelton, the Under-Secretary for External Affairs from 1925 until his death in 1941.

Skelton became a trusted and loyal ally of King in 1922 when it became clear that the Prime Minister distrusted the members of the Department. King described this body as a "Tory hive"<sup>64</sup> in his diary, and Skelton was brought in to rebuild the Department on a non-partisan basis. His success can be measured by the fact that he remained Under-Secretary during the Bennett regime as well as under MacKenzie King. By 1939, Skelton had become King's chief advisor and, it is claimed by several writers, that King's policies on Imperial relations and Canadian autonomy, in the pre-war years, were shaped and defined by Skelton from 1922 onwards.<sup>65</sup>

Skelton's views on foreign policy were so trusted that in 1939 when Skelton argued for neutrality in the war against Germany, his views were not dismissed without due consideration, although they clashed with those of King:

"Skelton argued that the surrenders and hypocrisy of appeasement from Ethiopia onwards, has undermined all the moral purposes for which the war ostensibly was being fought. Since no moral question was involved, Canada, like Ireland, should keep out. Being a North American nation, it might exercise some mediation in the course of a conflict morally chaotic."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Eayrs, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 40., also Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>66</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 250.

King argued with Skelton for two days in the crucial first week of September 1939 trying to convince him that Canada had no choice but to go to war at the side of Great Britain. Finally Skelton was convinced, and henceforth supported King to the hilt. As a result, however, King entered the House on September 7 physically and mentally exhausted.<sup>67</sup>

Loring Christie, next to Skelton the most important man in External Affairs argued for a policy of passive belligerence. His attitude reflected a strong North American isolationist feeling, as this statement referring to Canada's possible commitments in a European war indicates:

"...there is for Canada no strategic necessity for rapid mobilization or other action...To make it clear that Canada is not a participant in the same sense or on the same kind of unlimited scale as the European allies, but is only what for short may be called an 'associate' - a North American associate..."<sup>68</sup>

These attitudes were mirrored in much of the Department, but did not influence King's decision to enter World War II significantly. It was felt that the views of these men might be given greater weight if the position of Secretary of State for External Affairs was separated from the Prime Minister's office, giving External Affairs more of an independent voice at the Cabinet level.

This relationship of the Prime Minister to the External Affairs Department is well illustrated in a reply by King

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<sup>67</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>68</sup>Christie Papers, in Bayrs, op. cit., p. 40 (September 8, 1939)

to a request for the separation of the Prime Minister's office from that of External Affairs:

"The phases of the External Affairs work which require my time are not the administrative features... The tasks that require my time and thought are the broad questions of policy, to which both as Secretary of State for External Affairs and as Prime Minister I must give my attention."<sup>69</sup>

The officers of the Department did not agree with this procedure, and thought King inadequate as a policy maker. Department officials wanted Canada to take a far more active role in external affairs, but were hampered by the cautious policy of the Prime Minister and his desire to avoid commitments overseas. One External Affairs officer, Mr. Hume Wrong, reflected upon Canada's role at one 1937 conference at which he represented Canada:

"We should not be here at all, as our instructions should be summarised as: say nothing and do nothing unless you can undo something of what was done at Geneva...Dining alone this evening I developed a plan for the perfect representative of Canada at Conferences. Our delegate would have a name, even a photograph; a distinguished record, an actual secretary - but he would have no corporeal existence and no one would even notice that he was not there."<sup>70</sup>

In the department there was certainly a desire for diplomacy to be left to the diplomats unhampered by the Prime Minister. This impression was surely accurate in the planning of long-term objectives. MacKenzie King treated foreign policy decisions on a day-to-day basis, with no

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<sup>69</sup>King Papers, Vol 271, July 24, 1939, p. 229345.

<sup>70</sup>Nassey, op. cit., pp. 234-5.

long term plans beyond the need to maintain national unity, and (until 1939) to keep Canada uncommitted in foreign affairs. As one writer describes these ad hoc arrangements:

"He could not bring himself to face the prospect of war or the resulting division of Canada...Canada still had no policy, only the negation of all policy in King's repeated, fatuous assurance that Parliament would decide everything, without any advanced commitments, at the proper time."<sup>71</sup>

Even in less important situations King made decisions based upon the strength of the perceived requirements of the day, not upon a deep analysis of the issues involved for the future. As King stated in his diary after the working out of the Hyde Park Agreement, "I recall what Lord Morley said about not planning too far ahead in politics. That events determine what is possible."<sup>72</sup>

Long term planning was, and still is, weaker than the ordinary day-to-day decision-making process. The limited number of experts in both area and functional studies forced the Department to use its manpower (32 officers in 1939) on short term operations leaving little time for long term projects. Thus, many emergencies arose through a lack of contingency planning, and had to be solved quickly with little forethought.

Before 1939, planning of any kind in international affairs was limited by the lack of an intelligence gathering

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<sup>71</sup>Hutchinson, Mr. Prime Minister, op. cit., p. 260.

<sup>72</sup>King Diary, in Eayrs, op. cit., p. 155.

apparatus. By 1939, Canada had diplomatic missions in only one of the three Axis capitals. The Minister to Japan, Herbert Marler, was a political appointee, with a strong affection and sympathy for Japan. He was extremely susceptible to Japanese propaganda, and furnished the government with little concrete information. In the Sino-Japanese war, King was unable to make any statement or comment because; "...the slight knowledge that we possess." suggests that the intelligence they contained was neither extensive nor important."<sup>73</sup>

Canada had no diplomatic representation in either Italy or Germany and had to rely extensively upon the British foreign service reports provided through the Office of Dominion Affairs. (Fairly accurate appraisals of European conditions, but with few predictive qualities.)

The Canadian representative in Paris, M. Philippe Roy, was a strong Germanophone, and lauded the achievements of Hitler's regime. Canada's High Commissioner in London, Vincent Massey, spent most of his time in British government circles, and learned little not already provided by the Dominion Office.<sup>74</sup> Massey also had a propensity to blame "French vindictiveness" for the situation created in Europe.<sup>75</sup>

To compound the intelligence failure, King, after his

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-6.

<sup>75</sup>Massey, op. cit., pp. 229-31.

visit to Hitler in 1937, felt that war would not come to Europe. He saw Hitler as a reasonable man, and Chamberlain's policy of appeasement to be just, equitable, and entirely suited to the European situation. As James Eayrs states, "speculative-evaluative intelligence" was what was needed for the Prime Minister to properly judge the European situation. This data, Canada did not have.<sup>76</sup>

Even the sparse information received was not considered seriously by the Prime Minister. The best information received, quite definitely, was from British situation reports delivered through the Dominion Office to the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. King's distrust of the British and their reports was noted by Vincent Massey, in his diary. (June 17, 1937)

"His [King's] point of view in this matter seemed to reflect an anti-British bias (one of the most powerful factors in his make-up) extreme egoism and a very definite lack of confidence in my own ability to withstand what he would regard as sinister British influences."<sup>77</sup>

An incident is related by Lester Pearson (then first Secretary at the High Commission in London) which further shows the lack of faith King had in British sources. Pearson related that he was home on leave from London in the summer of 1939 when he saw a newspaper headline, "Nazis threaten Danzig and the Polish Corridor." Pearson went directly to King and proposed that war was imminent. King thought

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<sup>76</sup>Eayrs, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>77</sup>Massey, op. cit., p. 242.

Pearson's judgement unsound (supported by Skelton) and that he was overly alarmed. Pearson suggested that he cut short his leave and immediately fly back to London. (then a risky venture) King felt Pearson was "positively panicky" but Pearson, nevertheless, did fly back to London, and arrived a week before war was declared.<sup>78</sup>

In fact, contrary to the above indication, King did have access to information, at the time of the interview mentioned above, that Poland was to be invaded, and the approximate date. This information was in the hands of the Prime Minister by June 20, 1939, from K.P. Kirkwood, the Canadian representative to the Netherlands. Kirkwood had been in touch with a German diplomat, Herr zu Putlitz on March 11, 1939 and had been told of the projected German invasion of Czechoslovakia on June 20, 1939.

"Herr zu Putlitz now expresses his belief that a new German 'incident' directed against Poland will take place on or about Aug. 20th, though in what precise form he does not commit himself."<sup>79</sup>

Kirkwood's report continued with information about Germany provoking an attack by Poland and then taking "defensive action" to crush Poland. Zu Putlitz felt that the allies would not take military action in support of Poland.<sup>80</sup> The only answer to why King did not act upon

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<sup>78</sup>L. Pearson, "Forty Years On: Reflections on Our Foreign Policy", International Journal, (Summer, 1967), pp. 359-60.

<sup>79</sup>King Papers, June 20, 1939, Vol. 270, p. 228801.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

this report either center upon a suspicion about the accuracy of Kirkwoods interview, or that King did not read this particular piece of information, although it was delivered to his office.

The failure by King to use the External Affairs Department, its resources and personnel to greater advantage, and to exclude Parliament, most of the Cabinet, his advisors, and the public from foreign affairs deliberations precluded the thought of any effective opposition to King's views.

As an overview it is safe to say that the traditional checks and balances of the Canadian political system ceased to function in maximum detail during the September 1939 crisis. Whatever power the Senate and the Governor-General possessed was not utilized in the form of effective criticism or even analysis of the possibilities or probabilities of the particular courses of action that could have been adopted due partly to this lack of information on foreign affairs.

The House of Commons likewise abrogated its role as the critic of government policy, and as the body by which public issues were aired. The opposition parties were especially lax at his time. On the Cabinet level, there was little opposition to King's policies, although the attitudes of individual members of that body are known, and have been described in some detail within this section.

What has become clear is that the indecision before



the war was basically the result of King's policies in external affairs. The decision to enter World War II was based as much upon what King considered to be the important obligations to be considered for the good of Canada, as upon the dogma that "Parliament would decide."

## CHAPTER 4

### The Decision: September 1 to 10, 1939

#### A. External Relations and Public Reaction.

This chapter will focus upon the external pressures exerted upon the Canadian government in the crucial weeks prior to the commencement of hostilities against Germany, and the effects of these pressures upon public opinion and government policies. Chief of these pressures were the signing of the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact and the invasion of Poland by Germany. The reaction overseas to the Canadian decision not to declare war simultaneously with the United Kingdom will also be discussed in this section of the paper, primarily in regards to German and American reactions.

The British reaction to the separate declaration will be handled in a third part of this chapter, specifically in relation to military co-operation between Canada and Britain as an extension of pre-war interaction. The effect of the Royal Visit to Canada in 1939 will also be examined as a factor in Canadian-British relations in this crucial period. Also discussed in this section will be some of the possible reasons for the delay in declaring war against Germany, as well as some of the official reasons espoused by the King government.

It is the contention of several authors that the signing of the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact on August 21, 1939 was the key event which signalled the death-knell of MacKenzie King's non-involvement appeasement policy.<sup>1</sup> This event was seen as an alliance of dictators determined to conquer the democracies, and with ideological differences swept aside to facilitate the process. This was something that Ernest Lapointe dreaded, an alliance of Nazi's and Communists.

The non-aggression Pact precipitated in Canada a hasty series of contingency measures. On August 21 the Canadian Navy was mobilized, equipped for sea duty, and naval reservists were called up.<sup>2</sup> An office of Dominion Affairs communique to the Department of External Affairs on August 23 reported: "Military concentration is now in progress; large scale troop movements being reported from Berlin and Vienna in the direction of Pomerania, Silesia and Slovakia."<sup>3</sup>

On the same day, Polish troops moved westward, and both France and Britain began mobilization. King proclaimed the War Measures Act in conjunction with the previous events admitting that a state of "apprehended war" now existed. On August 24 the British Parliament convened in Special

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<sup>1</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>King Papers, Vol. 272, p. 230577.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. 279, p. 235694.

Session to discuss war measures. Canadian Armed Forces were geared for hostilities, and Naval Signals Stations were equipped for war. Also;

"Towards the later part of August the international situation became so acute that it was apparent that war might break out any day. The government accordingly initiated certain precautionary measures of defence, the plans for which had previously been perfected."<sup>4</sup>

A speedup in arms delivery from the United States with additional orders of up to fifty aircraft were ordered. On August 25, 800 reservists were called up, and on the next day, all Militia units were mobilized, 15,000 being used to man coastal defences and guard vulnerable points of national importance. At the same time, all shipping in Canadian waters was brought under Naval control. In the last week of August, squadrons of the R.C.A.F. were moved to the Atlantic coast and placed at full combat alert.<sup>5</sup> The Army called for volunteers, and was overwhelmed by thousands of World War I veterans, as well as large numbers of younger enthusiasts.

Even at this point, King was not fully committed to a war policy. He realised that, due to the pressure of public opinion which had solidified after the Munich crisis, his government would fall unless Canada supported Great Britain. The Cabinet was unanimous upon this policy, and upon the fact that Hitler was the aggressor and would have to be stopped by the use of force.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, King did not give up hope for a peaceful solution, although even he

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Vol. 272, p. 230577.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 230579.

realized by this time that Hitler could not be trusted to keep his promises. King sent telegrams to the Heads of State of Poland, Germany and Italy urging moderation, and a peaceful solution to the problem. Hitler did not answer the request, and the Polish Ministers saw themselves as the aggrieved party, with the responsibility for compromise in the hand of Germany.<sup>7</sup> King's last attempt at appeasement was completely unsuccessful. On September 1, Poland was invaded by German mechanized troops.

On September 1, the Canadian government was moved to take concrete action in response to German moves:

"On September 1st, when Germany actually invaded Poland, the Government declared the existence of a state of apprehended war as and from August 25th. On this day the formation of a Canadian Active Service Force of two divisions was authorized under Section 64 of the Militia Act."<sup>8</sup>

R.C.A.F. units based on the Atlantic coast were ordered to patrol offshore waters, and when Britain declared war on September 3, Canadian Naval units were ordered "to defend themselves if attacked". On September 4, a scheme for the internment of aliens was set up, followed by the establishment of a Prize Court on September 5.<sup>9</sup> Thus, by September 7, Canada was at war except by the strictest interpretation of international law, in that no declaration of war had been issued. The public could see that war was

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<sup>7</sup>G.P. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian External Relations (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), II, p. 130.

<sup>8</sup>King Papers, op. cit., Vol. 272, p. 230579.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 230580.

inevitable, and that the Axis powers were the aggressors; Britain was at war, and the majority of Canadians supported this decision.<sup>10</sup>

The period from September 3, (The Declaration of war by Britain) and September 10, (The Canadian declaration of war) needs to be examined more closely. During this period Canada was, technically speaking, neutral, although perhaps "actively neutral" might be a more accurate term due to the close relations maintained with Britain. Canada certainly could not meet the requirements for neutral status as Ernest Lapointe understood them:

"Neutrality may be defined as the attitude of impartiality adopted by a third state towards belligerents and recognized by belligerents, such attitudes creating rights and duties between the impartial state and the belligerents."<sup>11</sup>

The policy of the German Reich, in regards to Canadian neutrality, is somewhat complex. In a letter to King, the German Consul General in Ottawa, E. Windels, recognized Canada's neutrality and the inevitability of Canada joining with Britain in the struggle against Germany.

"As for Canada, which appears under your leadership, Mr. Prime Minister, to be resolved to enter this war against Germany, no dialectics will succeed in abolishing the fact that Canada has never been threatened by Germany...On the other hand, Germany is to be attacked by Canada...I am convinced that your government is resolved to embroil a whole people, against its will and unconsulted, in a terrible war, under the pretense of fighting for the freedom of mankind."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit. p. 249.

<sup>11</sup>Riddell, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>12</sup>King Papers, September 4, 1939, Vol 282, pp. 238510-3.

Windels continued by paraphrasing a French-Canadian journal, L'Illustration Nouvelle, which used the argument that King had no mandate from the people to go to war, since the last election was held in 1935, and a plebisite should be held to decide on participation in the war. However, it seems fairly certain that the Germans misjudged public opinion, as at this particular juncture the majority of Canadians would have voted to go to war, and it is upon this assumption that King made his decision. King had a fairly good idea of what the response to a referendum or election would be, especially in Quebec, where perhaps the majority would be against war. If this fact were to appear in public, national unity could have been lost, to the detriment of Canada's future war effort.

There were references in the German Press to Canadian violations of neutral status, validating Germany's stand in relation to Canada. By criticizing these "violations" the implication was that Canada was indeed seen by Nazi Germany as a neutral. One specific violation charged that aircraft were being funnelled through Canada from the United States for the R.A.F. at a time when Canada was supposed to be neutral,<sup>14</sup> a claim that was subsequently disproved.

The recognition of Canadian neutrality was undoubtedly used by Germany for propaganda purposes to illustrate the rifts in the Western camp. One example is a radio broadcast

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 238512-3.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Vol 272, p. 230444.

by Deutschlandsender in Polish, on September 6; "Canada declared that war in Europe is not her war and would remain neutral." Similar broadcasts were transmitted by Zessen to the Far East illustrating the isolationist tendencies in French Canada.<sup>15</sup> These broadcasts were meant to show Poland and the world that Canada would not be aiding the allies.

The propaganda value of Canadian neutrality was not the only reason for Germany hoping Canada would remain neutral. Canada, in the First World War had made a sizeable impression upon German military leaders.<sup>16</sup> With the military balance between Germany and the allies so close, a few Canadian divisions might have been a significant force.

The question of Canada's relations with Germany was further complicated by the sinking of the Athenia by a German submarine. Several hundred Canadians were aboard, many of whom died in the disaster. At this point impartial neutrality as a long-term policy became unacceptable to the Canadian government and people.

The reaction of the United States, in relation to Canada's status became extremely important to the Dominion. The United States Neutrality Laws forbade selling military supplies to any belligerent. At the outset of the war (September 3) Roosevelt's advisors were unclear as to the status of Canada, and worked under the assumption that when Britain was at war, the whole Empire and Commonwealth, including

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Vol. 272, p. 230461.

<sup>16</sup>L.F. Hannon, Canada at War (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), p. 70.



Canada was at war. The President telephoned King in Ottawa on the 5th asking him if this was the case. King replied in the negative,<sup>17</sup> and Canada was not recognized as a participant.<sup>18</sup> Canada continued to import military supplies until the Declaration of war was delivered on September 10. In fact, a flight of planes being delivered to Canada was stopped en route just before they crossed the United States' border.<sup>19</sup>

Another incident which emphasized the United States' recognition of Canadian neutrality occurred in the week under question. On September 3, three Canadian fighter aircraft flying from Ontario to Halifax were grounded at a Maine airport for repairs. United States Customs officials impounded the aircraft and crews after the twenty-four hour deadline, until Roosevelt confirmed Canada's neutral status, and the aircraft were released. Other Canadian Armed Forces units were allowed to pass through Maine in the week of neutrality.<sup>20</sup>

Another incident which illustrates the Canadian desire

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<sup>17</sup>Hardy, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>18</sup>The U.S. Ammended Proclamation of Neutrality: Sept. 6.  
 "A proclamation by the President of the United States of America proclaiming the neutrality of the United States in the war between Germany and France; Poland; and the United Kingdom, India, Australia and New Zealand."  
 King Papers, p. 232175.

<sup>19</sup>Bayrs, In Defence of Canada, op. cit., II, 186.

<sup>20</sup>J.E. Read, "Problems of an External Affairs Legal Advisor 1928 to 1946", International Journal Vol. XXII, (Summer, 1967), pp. 390-1.

to be recognized as neutral occurred when the Australian government was recognized as a belligerent on September 5. The Australian government had ordered planes in the United States but could not now receive them due to the United States' Neutrality Laws. They requested that Canadian officials take delivery of the aircraft, and send them on to Australia. The Canadian government refused, accentuating the desire for recognition as a neutral.<sup>20</sup>

To reiterate, a declaration of neutrality by a nation means very little unless that status is recognized by the countries of primary importance to the nation making the declaration. In this particular instance, Germany did everything in its power, short of stopping the invasion of Poland, to keep Canada neutral. The United States, after initial indecision, recognized Canada as neutral, and allowed military supplies to cross the international border. This policy on the part of the United States may have been influenced by the bond of friendship between King and Roosevelt, as well as to maintain North American solidarity in the face of European disorder.<sup>21</sup> The possibility of Canada remaining neutral in a British war was settled by the recognition afforded by these two nations.<sup>22</sup>

The major area of contention, in terms of Canadian neutrality, in this period, was the close relationship of

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<sup>20</sup>Eayrs, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>21</sup>C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1970), p. 98.

<sup>22</sup>Read, op. cit., pp. 390-1.

Canada to the United Kingdom. If any claim could have been made by Germany to dispute Canada's neutral status, it would center upon this interaction.

In the military sphere, co-operation was close between the two nations almost from the start, as this letter from the Department of External Affairs to Vincent Massey in London indicates;

"In view of the fact that Parliament is to meet on Thursday and that we are in communication with the Government of the United Kingdom as to appropriate methods of military co-operation..."<sup>23</sup>

The "liaison Letters" exchanging military information between London and Ottawa included material of a top-secret nature informing the British and Canadian defence staffs of each others defence standing and future planning.<sup>24</sup> These exchanges had continued since 1909, and had not been terminated at the time of Britain's declaration of war.

A few Canadian officers were in training in Britain, and several British officers were serving in the Canadian forces. One Royal Navy officer served as Director of Naval Intelligence and Plans. This office was considered by the British to be part of the world-wide Admiralty Intelligence System, and continued to supply information to Britain during the week of neutrality and afterwards.<sup>25</sup>

In the week of neutrality, two British cruisers were based on Halifax, with the approval of the Canadian government.

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<sup>23</sup>King Papers, p. 232175.

<sup>24</sup>McNaughton Papers, "Canadian Air Liaison Papers", No. I, 1935, p. 301.

<sup>25</sup>Stacey, op. cit., p. 80.

In the same week, discussions took place over British mobilization of several colliers under British registry but on Canadian charter. The Department of External Affairs replied with a request that these ships not be taken out of service as "Canadian defensive and war preparations involving production and transportation of supplies both for Canada and the United Kingdom will be seriously handicapped..."<sup>26</sup>

By the time the Canadian government met in Special Session to decide on Canada's status, Canadian naval units were already co-operating with British ships in the escorting of convoys, and the protection of ports along the Atlantic coast.<sup>27</sup> Canadian seamen were serving in the Royal Navy, and the Commonwealth Air Training Plan was starting operations to train British pilots for the R.A.F. in Canada.

The official British attitude towards Canadian neutrality was somewhat contradictory. In the British declaration of war, Canada was not committed. In fact, the terms of the declarations and statements between Britain and Germany used the term "His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom"<sup>28</sup> clearly leaving the Dominions to decide for themselves. On the other hand, when Neville Chamberlain addressed Parliament on September 1, he declared, "We shall enter it with a clear conscience with the support of the

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<sup>26</sup>King Papers, p. 232175.

<sup>27</sup>Hardy, op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>28</sup>J.W. Gantenbein, ed. Documentary Background to World War II, 1931-41 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 404-10.

Dominions and the British Empire..."<sup>29</sup>

All the while, close military liaison was being maintained. This is in part due to the cleavage of opinion between the government and the military. The Prime Minister and the Department of External Affairs viewed this problem in non-military terms, while the military leaders saw the inevitability of war, with Canada at Britain's side, and a necessity for joint planning in advance of such a war as not only common sense, but desirable militarily.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, Canada made no effort to declare her neutrality, publicly to the world or privately to Britain. In fact, the opposite occurred. On September 3, King wrote to Chamberlain asking what Canada could do to help Britain. Chamberlain replied, "Men, money and materiel". The Canadian government did all it could to supply what was needed.<sup>31</sup> As King described this policy:

"When war appeared inevitable, Parliament was instantly summoned. Canada, forthwith, by the decision of her Parliament, took her place at the side of the Allies. In anticipation of Parliament's decision, we had already begun direct and daily consultation with Britain."<sup>32</sup>

Part of this co-operation involved the incarceration of German diplomats in Britain, pending the release of United Kingdom consular officials. Britain placed restrictions on Consular officers of Germany in the Empire, and asked Canada to co-operate by holding the diplomatic

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<sup>29</sup>King Papers, Vol. 279, p. 235845.

<sup>30</sup>Stacey, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>31</sup>Bayrs, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>32</sup>King, Canada and the War, op. cit., p. 21.

staff's resident in Ottawa. This request came on September 8, and the action upon German diplomatic personnel was not decided upon before Canada issued her own declaration of war.<sup>33</sup>

An additional factor which caused this close relationship to develop was the Royal Visit of 1939. The visit of the King and Queen to Canada in June helped solidify relations between the two nations. King recorded in his diary on August 26, 1939, a talk he had with the Governor General, Lord Tweedsmuir:

"I told him that the King's visit had helped immensely re-uniting Canada for the crisis that last September I would not have had a united Cabinet... Today I had all united on our participation if there were an act of aggression which brought England and France into a war with Germany."<sup>34</sup>

The great success of this tour strengthened the bonds of loyalty to the Royal Family, subsequently drawing public opinion towards Great Britain and the support of Britain's Monarch. Vincent Massey recounts a conversation he had with an English friend during the war who had picked up a Canadian soldier. When asked why he had come so far to fight, the soldier replied, "I saw the Queen when she was in Canada and I said if there is ever a war, I'm going to fight for that little lady."<sup>35</sup> Certainly the emotional attachment for the Monarchy and the affinity for the United Kingdom was

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<sup>33</sup>King Papers, Vol. 279, pp. 235941-3.

<sup>34</sup>King Diary, in Stacey, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Massey, op. cit., pp. 276-7.

strengthened by this visit.

A more concrete strategic problem which needed joint planning in the crucial week of neutrality was the defence of Newfoundland, a British Crown Colony, which had no local defences, and relied for its protection on the might of the Royal Navy. Britain had no contingency plans for the garrisoning of the Island, or the coast of Labrador, since Newfoundland was not of strategic importance to Britain in a European war. The pre-war British plans (July, 1938) showed a need for small naval units (6 aux. minesweepers, 3 anti-submarine vessels) and an air squadron. The British communique continued by stating:

"No squadron of the peacetime Royal Air Force, however, is earmarked for this purpose and in order to carry out the above plans the necessary squadron would either have to be raised as a new unit in the United Kingdom after the outbreak of war or be provided from some other source in the British Commonwealth."<sup>36</sup>

The implications drawn from this statement by the Canadian government was that she would have to provide the necessary defences for Newfoundland, and these forces were earmarked in December 1938.<sup>37</sup> Again, Canada had little choice in this instance, since although Newfoundland was of low priority in Britain's defence structure, it was of crucial strategic importance to Canada. Naval and air units of an enemy based upon this island could sever Canada's trade and communications with Britain. Also the Nova Scotia Steel industry was dependent upon Newfoundland iron ore.

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<sup>36</sup>Stacey, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

By 1939, Britain had handed over all the defence responsibilities of this Crown Colony to Canada. The Canadians, as this statement by King indicates, did not protest this arrangement:

"The British government told us that we could render the greatest help by assisting in the naval and air defence of Newfoundland, Labrador, the French islands in the Gulf, and the British and French West Indies. We provided that assistance at once."<sup>38</sup>

However reluctantly, Canada was forced to co-operate with Great Britain in the defence of this vital region, especially in the week of neutrality when British interests were directed elsewhere.

Causing further confusion in these several weeks of negotiations were the constitutional factors involving Canadian sovereignty. The question became one of whether or not Canada was formally independent of Great Britain, and crossed the whole spectrum of public opinion, as well as causing rifts within the government. MacKenzie King, for example, believed that Canada was completely independent of Great Britain. Ernest Lapointe, the Minister of Justice, on the other hand, believed that neutrality was impossible for Canada, and when Britain was at war, Canada was at war.

By 1939, King had made several statements making it clear that under his leadership, Canada would not go to war automatically, but would do so only with the support and consent of Parliament.<sup>39</sup> King made this clear to the British

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<sup>38</sup>King, Canada and the War, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>39</sup>Riddell, op. cit., pp. 173-205.



in the pre-war period, as well as during the war, as this speech in London indicates:

"Ours was not an automatic response to some mechanical organization of Empire. Canada's entry into war was the deliberate decision of a free people, by their own representatives in a free Parliament."<sup>40</sup>

However, in the pre-war years, the validity of this policy stated by King was seriously questioned. In 1937 after his visit to Hitler, King affirmed that his government would stand behind Britain if a European war broke out.<sup>41</sup> Statements such as these, fortified by the Justice Minister's belief that Canada was legally bound by a British declaration, under the old Laurier formula,<sup>42</sup> did much to create uncertainty in the minds of Canadians.

There are a number of interpretations as to why Canada remained neutral when Great Britain had declared war, chief of which was to disprove the belief that Canada could not make a separate declaration of war, and reinforce Canadian independence in the eyes of the world and the Canadian people. Under King, Canada had gradually won free and complete independence of action in foreign affairs. King was not to lose the opportunity to affirm independence:

"...King had not led his country up the rocky, uncertain slope towards complete self-government to overlook now this golden opportunity to proclaim to the world Canada's state of complete and uninhibited nationhood."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>King, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>41</sup>Glazebrook, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>42</sup>K. MacNaught, "The 1930's", in Careless and Brown, op. cit., p. 272.

<sup>43</sup>Hardy, op. cit., p. 175.

Certainly this factor was quoted extensively during and after the war as the primary reason for Canada's delay in declaring war. However, other factors were involved. The legal "casus belli" for Britain was the violation of Polish territory which the British, under treaty were pledged to protect. The Canadian government did not have a defence treaty with Poland, so nebulous humanistic, idealistic arguments were used, or the argument that Canada would be next in line if Britain were defeated. The fact that Parliament was not in session, but by King's promises, would have to decide, slowed down the formal decision-making process until a Session could be called. However, this was just a formal manifestation of a decision implemented already. Before Britain declared war, Canada had given notice of her intentions:

"... the action taken by the [Canadian] government on Sept. 1, when availing itself of the authority granted under the War Measures Act of 1914, it proclaimed a state of 'apprehended war.'"<sup>44</sup>

The expressed reason for this action before the decision of Parliament was "to avoid any possible prejudice by reason of the few day's delay in declaring war."<sup>45</sup> King also presupposed that Parliament and the people would support his initiatives; a fairly safe premise.

A second argument put forward by a number of authors to explain Canadian neutrality was the need to utilize the United States' defence industry for as long as possible.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>45</sup>Read, op. cit., p. 390.

Neutral status on the part of Canada would mean the United States' Neutrality Laws would not apply, and Canada could buy military hardware from the United States.<sup>46</sup> Official government statements also put forward this argument:

"There was some remark on the length of time taken for Canada to make this formal declaration...the delay was actually of great service to the British and Allied cause, for, until the formal declaration of war by Canada, the United States Neutrality Law was not evoked against this country."<sup>47</sup>

This argument, however, has little validity as a conscious policy by the Canadian government. Certainly, some military supplies were sent to Canada in the week that Canada was recognized as neutral, but their overall value to the allied cause was negligible at this stage.

The R.C.A.F. purchasing mission only arrived in Washington to start negotiations for the military on August 26, 1939, a week before the invasion of Poland. This equipment amounted to thirty-five aircraft and some electronic equipment, at a cost of less than \$7.5 Million. The aircraft were not delivered, as Canada was at war before they could cross the border. An inventory was not kept of what was received, and since the major purchase (aircraft) could not be delivered, the equipment sent could not have been of substantial value.<sup>48</sup> King, owing to the lateness in sending

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>47</sup>King Papers, Vol. 272, p. 230581.

<sup>48</sup>Eayrs, op. cit., pp. 184-6.

the mission, and the small amount of money provided, could not have seen this as a concrete reason to delay declaring war.

To plan ahead under the assumption that the United States would recognize Canadian neutrality, would have been a tenuous arrangement at best, with Canada obviously engaged in close joint planning with Great Britain. In fact, indications given to the United States could have given the opposite impression. On September 2, a request from the Department of External Affairs, parallel to that of Great Britain, to Cordell Hull in Washington gave the impression that Canada was on the verge of declaring war along with Great Britain:

"I have the honour to inform you that the Canadian Government would appreciate it, should the Government of the United States accept the undertaking requested by His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington, if this protection could be accorded to Canadian nationals."<sup>49</sup>

Also there was no indication that any of the equipment was transhipped to Great Britain to strengthen Allied defences directly against Germany. Thus, despite official statements to the contrary, the effect of countervailing the United States Neutrality Law was incidental to the main argument of asserting Canada's independence from Great Britain.

King, to show that Canada was entirely independent of Great Britain, emphasized this delay in declaring war by not updating the declaration to coincide with that of Britain. Australia and New Zealand did not pass declarations

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<sup>49</sup>King Papers, Vol. 272, p. 230570.

of war until September 4, but they updated their declarations to the same time as that of Great Britain. Canada could have done the same, but for nationalistic reasons, the date had to be different. To update the decision would not have compromised Canada's position vis-a-vis the United States in terms of acquiring military supplies.

Long-term planning, with every ounce of military hardware a valuable possession, which the above policy suggests, was not conceived in 1939, when it was thought that the war would be of short duration. Besides the few rather nebulous threats in the pre-war years, the Canadian government and military saw no reason to believe that either Western Europe or Canada were seriously threatened by the Axis.<sup>50</sup> It was only after the fall of France and the commencement of the Battle of Britain that King worked out a comprehensive war plan, and his "northern bridge" theory.<sup>51</sup> Thus, no serious consequences were envisioned to the allied cause by Canada's initial week of formal neutrality. Also, this week provided a useful precedent for future threats to Canadian independence.

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<sup>50</sup>King Papers, Vol. 221, pp. 189987-190002.

<sup>51</sup>King described the North Atlantic Region as a bridge starting at Great Britain, including Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland as stepping stones to Canada. In 1939 traffic moved eastward over the bridge, but could move the other way:

"We know it is not enough to garrison the bridge itself, unless we are prepared to defend this island Britain which is its eastern bridgehead. That is why the fighting men of Canada are here in growing numbers to share the task which is our defence as well as yours."  
King, op. cit., p. 11.

### B. Analysis of the Special Session of Parliament

For most Canadians, during the crisis of 1939 there was little question as to what Canada's ultimate decision would be. Participation in the war was seen as inevitable with most Canadians supporting this view. In this instance, precedents were available to enable the government to dissect public opinion and predict the mood of Parliament.

One precedent comes immediately to the fore. After the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, it seemed for a short while that Britain might go to war with Italy. The Canadian government put all forces upon a state of readiness, and announced publicly that this alert was only a routine check, so the public would not be unduly alarmed. General McNaughton, the Canadian Chief of the General Staff, predicted a situation involving an emotional response to a British appeal similar to that seen in World War I:

"McNaughton thought that if an attack were made on British shipping or the base at Alexandria, 'the sentiment in Canada would be similar to 1914' and demand government action in support of Britain."<sup>52</sup>

Such a policy was not in line with the policies that MacKenzie King had fought for in the inter-war years. He resisted this call to empire as he would do in 1939.

Close military co-operation with Britain involved entanglements such as the leasing of the naval bases at

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<sup>52</sup>J. Swettenham, McNaughton, 1887-1939 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968), I, 332.

Halifax and Esquimalt to the Royal Navy. The gearing of industry for war had started in the late 1930's. (Bren gun contract, and some aircraft) Newspapers were becoming more ardent in their support of King, and were moralizing more freely about the need to help the democracies of Europe. At the same time, pacifistic sentiments declined among the clergy and university people. (a significant sign from a group of influential opinion-makers)<sup>53</sup> Thus, according to the latest indicators, there was little chance that the public would push for neutrality or non-involvement.

Taking these indicators as a reference base, the Cabinet met, before the Special Session to formulate government policy. On September 1, the War Measures Act was proclaimed, the Armed Forces were mobilized, and the Wartime Prices and Trade Board was established.<sup>54</sup> Policy was established early to justify these war preparations. On September 1, Vincent Massey in London received a telegram from the Department of External Affairs to keep the High Commissioner informed as to the Cabinet's decision. One excerpt from that telegram reads as follows:

"In the event of the United Kingdom becoming engaged in war in the effort to resist aggression, the government of Canada have unanimously decided, as soon as Parliament meets, to seek its authority for effective cooperation by Canada at the side of Britain...The government has provided for the immediate issue of a proclamation under the War Measures Act in view of the existence of a state of apprehended war."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Anderson, op. cit., pp. 130-3.

<sup>54</sup>Hardy, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>55</sup>King Papers, Vol. 274, pp. 232136-7.

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet decided that war could not be avoided, and set out immediately to win the acceptance of Parliament, summoned for September 7. In the meantime, active co-operation with Great Britain was maintained, and the Armed Forces were put on alert, with orders to support British defence measures in the Western Atlantic. On September 1, King stated that policy to the press:

"...all the necessary measures will be taken for the defence of Canada. Consultation with the United Kingdom will be continued. In the light of all the information at its disposal, the Government will then recommend to Parliament the measures which it believes to be the most effective for co-operation and defence. That Parliament will sanction all necessary measures, I have not the least doubt."<sup>56</sup>

King further stated that the form and degree of participation by Canada in the war would be decided upon by Parliament.<sup>57</sup> The omission of participation by Parliament in the deliberation stage is significant. This step bypassed the Parliamentary role of criticism of basic government policy, and the airing of public views, and made the Parliamentary process something of a formality. When Parliament met, the emphasis of the government platform in the House was upon convincing the House that Canada should continue the process already established. The scope and method of participation was not really discussed in the Special Session, contrary to King's preceding statement.

The discussion in the House of Commons centered upon

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<sup>56</sup>Pickersgill, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.



several important themes. The first was a consideration of the initiatives carried out by Cabinet in the name of the Government prior to September 7. The Speech from the throne gave several indicators that set the tone for the Session. The Governor General's speech contained excerpts which indicated that Canada was already at war, and Parliament would have to support this policy. One such statement reads as follows: "You will be asked to consider estimates for expenditures which has been or may be caused by the state of war which now exists."<sup>58</sup> In the same speech, however, the Governor General also showed that this decision was not automatic, and Parliament would have to make the decision:

"You have been summoned at the earliest moment in order that the government may seek authority for the measures necessary for the defence of Canada, and for co-operation in the determined effort which is being made to resist further aggression..."<sup>59</sup>

It is interesting that no other policy was presented in the Speech from the Throne in terms of alternatives to declaring war. In this respect, Parliament was presented with one policy to accept or reject.<sup>60</sup> The crucial importance of the Speech from the Throne was that it became the focal point of the whole Session, as King stated:

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<sup>58</sup>Canada, House of Commons, Debates, September 7, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Omitted from the Speech from the Throne:

"It is my hope that the desire for peace, which lies so close to the hearts of the peoples of all countries, will yet serve to avert international strife, and to restore among nations co-operation, understanding and goodwill."  
King Papers, Vol. 276, p. 233<sup>425</sup>.

"If the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne is approved the government will therefore immediately take steps for the issue of a formal proclamation declaring the existence of a state of war between Canada and the German Reich."<sup>61</sup>

The debate in the House of Commons on the Speech from the Throne centered upon three major themes: The first of these was an accentuation of the aggressive nature of Germany as an expansionist power set upon world domination. Again, this argument for participation was used by both sides of the House. The Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Manion stated at the culmination of a list of Nazi conquests:

"...Canada is the richest prize among the nations of the world. We should remember as well that this Canada of ours is very vulnerable to attack in these ultra-scientific days."<sup>62</sup>

King supported and reinforced this view by adding an extra dimension to this theory. King thought that Canada would be threatened indirectly, that is, if Great Britain were to be defeated by Germany.

"I noticed in the press last evening that one of the German papers which is supposed to be an organ of the administration had quoted Hitler as saying that if England wished to fight she must remember that if she entered this fight the prize of victory would be the British Empire. Well, that includes Canada."<sup>63</sup>

Whatever the validity of this potential menace, there was a perceived threat of direct German attack strongly believed by members on both sides of the House. The reaction was to support Britain in stopping nazism before it

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<sup>61</sup>House of Commons, Debates, September 9, 1939, pp. 88-9.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

spread to Canada.<sup>64</sup>

Another crucial series of arguments for participation centered upon the moral and democratic principles that were being submerged in Europe, and that Canada should fight to preserve these universal rights. Ernest Lapointe supplied King with a short series of points that he considered important reasons for going to war. To emphasize the moral aspect of this "crusade", Lapointe quoted President Roosevelt at the opening of Congress, January 4, 1939:

"There comes a time in the efforts of men when they must prepare to defend not their homes alone but the tenets of faith and humanity on which their churches, their governments, and their very civilization are founded. The defence of religion, of democracy, and of good faith among nations is all the same fight. To save one we must now make up our minds to save all."<sup>65</sup>

It was important that this particular argument be stressed since Canada was under no treaty obligations to either Poland, France or Britain. To emphasize that these countries were the bulwark of democracy and must be supported to the maximum by Canada was a cardinal point in the Special Session of Parliament, as this excerpt from King's speech on September 8 indicates:

"Where is he creeping to? Into those communities of the north, some of which to-day say they are going to remain neutral. I tell them if they remain neutral in this struggle, and Britain and France go down, there is not one of them that will bear for long the name that it bears at the present time; not one of them."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>King, Canada and the War, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>65</sup>King Papers, Aug. 31, 1939, Vol. 270, p. 229106.

<sup>66</sup>House of Commons, Debates, Sept. 8, 1939, p. 22.

By this particular time period, King had become a more bitter man. In 1937 he had trusted Hitler, but since that time Hitler had annexed the Rhineland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Danzig and now Poland. In reply to a note from Lord Riverdale, (Chairman of the United Kingdom Air Mission) who had passed on a letter from a German military official trying to justify the reclaiming of territory lost at Versailles, King indicated this change in attitude towards Nazi Germany and its leader:

"I thank you warmly for sending me a copy of the letter you received from Germany on the eve of war. The subtle deceit of the whole Nazi regime surpasses, I believe, anything of the kind in history."<sup>67</sup>

King's speech in the House included references to the mover (Mr. Hamilton of Ontario) the seconder (M. Blanchette of Quebec) and the third speaker (Mr. Manion) all of whom were war veterans, as representatives of the two great nations, Britain and France, who were once again fighting to defend freedom and democracy in the world. King continued with the reminder that the freedom, religion and constitutional rights that they now enjoyed had been given to them by the Frenchmen and Britishers who had died for them.<sup>68</sup> King continued with the statement that democracy, liberty and freedom must also be re-instated in Germany as well as the rest of Europe.

"That regime [Nazism] has brought its own people under its iron heel. For the most part the people of Germany to-day are slaves, enslaved by a government,

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<sup>67</sup>King Papers, Vol. 277. pp. 234207-10.

<sup>68</sup>House of Commons, Debates, Sept. 8, 1939, pp. 18-9.

so-called, a dictator which holds a rifle at the head of every one of its citizens unless he is prepared to do its bidding."<sup>69</sup>

By the end of the Special Session, King was assured of almost unanimous support from the various political parties. At the same time, it was apparent that large groups of Canadians, in all probability a large proportion of French-Canadians were reluctant to go to war, and had accepted the decision only because of the promise of no conscription for overseas service, so eloquently presented by Lapointe in behalf of the Liberal government.<sup>70</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain precisely why the House of Commons, and particularly the Quebec members, did not more closely reflect the views of their constituents. Several reasons immediately come to mind, the first being the highly emotional character of the House during the Special Session. The most vocal elements in the House were from the pro-war faction, which included the Cabinet leaders of the majority party, the Conservative Party, and the majority of the members of the minority parties. The House was also presented with a *de facto fait accompli*, as this statement by Ernest Lapointe indicates:

"There are certain measures of economic, naval and air co-operation which are obviously necessary and desirable and which it is possible to undertake without delay...The information we have obtained indicates that the most immediate and effective further means of co-operation would be a rapid expansion of air training, and of air and naval facilities, and the dispatch of trained air personnel."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>70</sup>Ward, op. cit., pp. 124-5.

<sup>71</sup>House of Commons, Debates, Sept. 8, 1939, p. 64.

The government no conscription pledge muted much of the opposition from French Canada. Also the majority of French-Canadian members maintained Party solidarity and only a few actively attacked the government policy. One Liberal M.P., M. Maxime Raymond tabled a Bill on September 8 with a petition signed by "thousands of citizens against participation by Canada in any extra-territorial war."<sup>72</sup> The amendment was defeated with less than five members supporting the motion. Another French-Canadian member, M. Lacombe, called for a plebisite of participation, extending the vote to include all men old enough to be conscripted, since the mandate of the Parliament had not been renewed since 1935.<sup>73</sup> This motion was also rejected with an unrecorded vote.

The most articulate anti-war plea was delivered by the Leader of the C.C.F., J.S. Woodsworth. Woodsworth's arguments not only reflected his own pacifistic philosophy, but also the feeling of many of the French-Canadian isolationists. As Woodsworth stated to the House: "It is only a few months since we erected in Ottawa a memorial to the poor fellows who fell in the last war; it is hardly finished before we are into the next."<sup>74</sup>

Woodsworth was something of a North American isolationist. He saw close ties with the United States and non-involvement as a hemispheric problem, benefiting Canada more than involvement in imperialistic wars.

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<sup>72</sup>House of Commons, Debates, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

Maxime Raymond criticized the moral principles so glibly presented by government spokesmen, as well as the business establishments in London and Paris which had profiteered in the last war, and in all likelihood would do the same in the next:

"I learned that my sons were killed at the front with shells manufactured by countries at whose side I was fighting...I learned that, not later than last month, while rushing to conclude alliances in order to put a check on Germany, England and France were selling war materials to Germany."<sup>75</sup>

Raymond concluded by saying that Canada's duty was to stay aloof from foreign wars, and to defend the homeland if directly attacked.<sup>76</sup> This argument, nevertheless was fairly effectively destroyed by Lapointe who spoke immediately afterwards. He emphasized events such as the sinking of the Athenia, and the pro-war mood of the public to show that Canada could not remain aloof, as the war had already come to this nation. Also, neutrality on the part of Canada would deprive the allies of strategic raw materials. In neutrality Canada would be aiding Germany and Nazism. If Britain were defeated, Canada would be threatened by German occupation of Newfoundland, Bermuda and the West Indies. Canada, under these conditions, had no choice but to declare war.<sup>77</sup>

The outcome of the deliberations outlined above culminated with an unrecorded vote, with only J.S. Woodsworth

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-8.

rising to protest the decision. In the Senate there was unanimous approval. Parliament had decided that Canada could not stand aside from the Second World War, and the mechanics of declaring war were carried out. (Appendix K)

National unity had been maintained, although it was rather artificial. King's promise of a moderate war effort, and no conscription for overseas service helped to establish this initial unity. Only a war of short duration could have justified King's position, since a moderate or limited effort was not synonymous with modern total war.



## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

The consequences of the Special Session of Parliament and the decision to enter World War II, can be divided into two categories. The first of these was the effect upon the internal political system of Canada, and included such problems as the challenges from Quebec and Ontario regarding the Federal direction of the war, as well as the controversy surrounding the two conscription crises of 1942 and 1944.

The second section will include a short elaboration of Canada's contribution to the allied war effort, and an examination of the effects of the Canadian declaration of war upon Anglo-Canadian and Canadian-American relations in the war and early post-war periods.

The first test for the wartime government came from Quebec. In October 1939, Maurice Duplessis, the Premier of Quebec, called an election on the issue that the declaration of war had been an infringement upon Provincial rights. He wanted a vote on the question of participation in the war, and on conscription. The Liberal government, Duplessis stated, was trying to deprive Quebec of her autonomy.<sup>1</sup> King could not afford to ignore this challenge

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<sup>1</sup>Hardy, op. cit., p. 183.

to government policy, due to the fear of a break in the united front so narrowly maintained.

Lapointe, Power and Cardin took up the government side in the election, promising no conscription. These three Ministers threatened to resign if Quebec did not accept the Federal decision.

"...would it [Quebec] support its ministers who had remained in the government and were taking an active part in the war effort, or would it condemn their actions and declare that the province was not going to participate in any way whatsoever in the war effort?"<sup>2</sup>

The main issue raised was conscription, with Duplessis arguing that participation in the war would inevitably lead to conscription. (The 1st Canadian Division had already sailed for Britain) Lapointe, Power and Cardin made a pact that they would resign if conscription was introduced, and evidently this promise was enough to swing the Quebec voters overwhelmingly behind King and his government, as the results of the election show. (Duplessis was reduced from 76 to 15 seats)<sup>3</sup>

After the hard-fought victory in Quebec, King was almost immediately threatened from another source. Mitchell Hepburn, the Liberal Premier of Ontario pushed through a vote of no-confidence in King, claiming that the war effort was half-hearted and ineffectual. This threat from a Lib-

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<sup>2</sup>Ward, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 128-30.

eral Premier was used as a pretext to call an election for the Spring of 1940. King was aware that his government's mandate had not been renewed since 1935, and he did not want to call an election in the midst of war. He called one in the "phoney war" period before the full force of war could be brought to bear on Canada, since by 1940 it was seen that the struggle would be of long duration, so that he could have a clear mandate for the duration.<sup>4</sup> King was once again successful, and the Liberal government was returned with the largest majority in the history of Canada. (Liberals; 178 seats, Conservatives; 39)<sup>5</sup>

However, the major challenges to King's wartime government revolved around conscription. In 1939, King promised no conscription for overseas service. The government policy, however, became less clear as the war progressed. In June 1940, an act (National Resources Mobilization Act) was passed calling up men for home defence duties. The first major crisis, however, did not arise until 1942, when a decision was thrust upon the government by the declaration of war against Japan. British Columbia was now directly threatened, and Canadian troops were defeated by Japan at Hong Kong. The government, at this point, considered the nation threatened to the point that conscription might be necessary, and a plebisite was held to feel out public opinion. It was found that 2,945,514 Canadians

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<sup>4</sup>Hardy, op. cit., pp. 184-7.

<sup>5</sup>Roberts, op. cit., p. 79.

approved of conscription, while 1,643,006 were against such a policy.<sup>6</sup> The Cabinet became seriously divided over the conscription crisis, with Cardin resigning over the government bill to amend the National Service Act to allow conscription for overseas service. (Bill 80) King was no longer so adamant on his non-conscription pledge, as this 1942 statement indicates; "not necessarily conscription, but conscription if necessary." He was moving more and more towards conscription for overseas service. First, conscription was introduced for home defence, (1940), secondly, the home defence sphere was enlarged to include the whole Western Hemisphere, and third, conscription was introduced for overseas service, if necessary. (1942)<sup>7</sup> In 1944, 16,908 conscripts were sent overseas, due to a manpower shortage in Europe, of which 2,400 reached the front lines.<sup>8</sup> This was perhaps the hardest barrier King had to overcome in all his years in office.

The crisis once more saw King's Cabinet divided, with C.P. Power resigning his post. King weathered this threat and the reaction from Quebec, with the help of Louis St. Laurent. King's success in both these crises had to be due to the slow progressive steps taken towards conscription rather than a duplication of the policy followed in 1917

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<sup>6</sup>Stacey, op. cit., pp. 397-401.

<sup>7</sup>D.J. Goodspeed, The Armed Forces of Canada 1867-1967 (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1967), p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>M. Gen. E.L.M. Burns, Manpower in the Canadian Army 1939-45 (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1956), pp. 5-6.

when conscription was suddenly thrust upon Quebec. That conscription was introduced so smoothly in the Second World War is a tribute to King and the French Canadian members of his Cabinet.

One assertion made earlier (Chapter 5) was that the delay in Canada's declaration of war was engineered to assert Canadian sovereignty and ability to make independent decisions. The declarations of war against both Italy and Japan differed fundamentally from this earlier one against Germany. The guiding principle in the German declaration was that "Parliament would decide", but both of these declarations (as well as the declarations against Rumania, Hungary and Finland) were decided upon without consulting Parliament.<sup>9</sup> The government simply issued an order-in-council to the effect that a state of war now existed.

One additional point was that in both cases Canada's declaration came before the major nations involved declared war. In the Italian case, Canada declared war commencing June 10, 1940. France and Britain were not at war until 12:01 a.m. June 11. The declaration of war against Japan was also concluded before the United States' declaration. (December 7, 1941) In both cases, the official reason stated was that legal protection was provided to any member of the Armed Forces who might have been involved with Italian or Japanese forces. In the Italian case, a Canadian naval vessel fired on an Italian ship on June 10, after

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<sup>9</sup>Hutchinson, Mr. Prime Minister, op. cit., p. 269.

receiving word that war had been declared, and the declaration was updated to validate the seizure. In the Japanese case, there was a fear of raids similar to the Pearl Harbour type along the West Coast of Canada. To avoid inhibiting the military on the West coast, a declaration was announced, and armed forces personnel that might have become involved with the Japanese were protected.<sup>10</sup> However, if this was true in the case of these two decisions, was not the risk of clashes between German and Canadian forces even greater in the week of neutrality? If the above argument holds, Canada should have updated the decision to September 3, 1939.

It is more probable that the German declaration was used to assert Canadian independence, and there was no need to do the same in the case of Italy and Japan. Expediency, in the latter, overruled international political considerations.

The most direct result of the declaration of war against Germany was Canada's contribution to the war effort against the Axis powers. Canada began the war with 9,400 men in the Armed Forces, 11 ships in the Navy, almost no modern combat aircraft, and no tanks or armoured vehicles. Such a forces could hardly have impressed or deterred any potential aggressor in 1939. However, such was the expansion rate of the Armed Forces and defence industry, that by 1945

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<sup>10</sup>Read, op. cit., pp. 392-3.

Canada was considered the world's fourth rated power.<sup>11</sup> This remarkable change should be looked at in some detail.

Perhaps the greatest project carried out in Canada during the war was the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. From its beginning in the spring of 1940, to the end of 1945, the plan produced 131,553 fliers and 106,000 ground crew. The plan was deemed, "one of the greatest factors in the victory of the democratic powers."<sup>12</sup> About half of the personnel trained were Canadian, another one-third British, and the remainder Australian, New Zealanders, Poles, Czechs, Dutch, Norwegian, Belgian and French.

The contribution of the R.C.A.F. was substantial. By 1945 the R.C.A.F. had become the fourth largest Allied Air Force, with forty coastal patrol squadrons and forty-eight fighter and bomber squadrons, of which the No. 6 Group, Bomber Command was sending 200 bombers a night to attack Germany. R.C.A.F. squadrons served in North Africa (fighter) in Burma (transport) and in Ceylon (Patrol) as well as from Britain, Newfoundland and Canada. (Patrol) Canadians also served in the R.A.F. By 1945 there were over 6,000 Canadian radar mechanics in the R.A.F. In fact, there were more Canadians in the R.A.F. than in the R.C.A.F. by the end of the war.<sup>13</sup>

The navy performed a far less glamorous but equally

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<sup>11</sup>R.J. Sutherland, "Canada's Long Term Strategic Situation", International Journal Vol. XVIII (Summer, 1962), pp. 203-4.

<sup>12</sup>L.F. Hannon, Canada at war (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), p. 96.

<sup>13</sup>Goodspeed, op. cit., pp. 173-9.

important role throughout the war. The Navy started the war with 11 ships, but in 1945 deployed 471 ships ranging from aircraft carriers and cruisers to Mtb's and landing craft. Canadian ships sank 29 axis submarines, with the loss of 1,990 men. The Navy assumed command of all convoy escorts in the North West Atlantic, for most of the war, with Canadian ships operating in the English Channel, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the North Sea, (to Murmansk) and a cruiser in the Indian Ocean, as well as one in the Pacific.<sup>14</sup> As in the case of the R.C.A.F., large numbers of Canadians serving in the Royal Navy, in all types of ships, and in all theatres of the war.

The contribution of the Canadian Army to the war effort in the early stages of the war was somewhat passive but necessary. the 1st Division, in the early part of the Battle of Britain was the only fully equipped division in Great Britain. "In these circumstances the 1st Canadian division achieved an importance undreamed of two months previously... the division was 'the strongest element in a very weak fabric.'<sup>15</sup>

The division was reinforced in December 1940 by the 2nd Division, and a Canadian Corps was formed. The Army played no active role in Europe until the Dieppe Raid (66% casualties) vindicating King's cautious attitude towards the deployment of Canadian troops:

<sup>14</sup> G.A. Milne, H.M.C.S. (Toronto: Thomas Allen Ltd., 1960), pp. 14-7.

<sup>15</sup> Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 115.



"A feeling of not committing Canada to severe casualties pervaded defence thinking until well into the war when public opinion pressed for Canadian troops to be used in a 'useful' capacity instead of merely protecting Britain from a not-to-certain German threat of invasion."<sup>16</sup>

With the loss of 2,000 Canadian troops to the Japanese at Hong Kong and the Dieppe disaster, Canada needed a victory, or at least a successful campaign, for morale purposes. This opened the way for the Canadian 1st Division and the 1st Tank Brigade to be sent to Italy. The tremendous casualties of this campaign, especially the Battle for Ortona, led to the manpower shortage which caused the conscription crisis of 1944.

Canadians served with distinction in the Normandy invasion, contributing the 3rd Division, 2nd Armoured Brigade and the 1st Paratroop Battalion to the D Day landings. The 1st Canadian Army (the first formation of its kind completely under the command of Canadian officers) liberated the Netherlands, Northern Belgium, and the Channel coast of France.

Small Commando, Naval Commando and intelligence units were formed, and French-Canadian wireless operators worked with the Maquis in France and Belgium. The Canadian Army by the end of 1945 had reached the strength of 730,625 men and women.<sup>17</sup>

Canada, in relation to the strategic direction of the war, played a minor role. Military direction was the sole

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<sup>16</sup> T. Robertson, The Shame and the Glory (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Hannon, op. cit., p. 112.

perogative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, (British and American) and Canada was not granted anything more than an occasional observer, with strategic directions relayed to the Canadian Chiefs-of-staff by their British counterparts.<sup>18</sup>

The Quebec conferences of 1943 (Quadrant) and 1944 (Octagon) were the most likely to include Canadian participation in strategic direction. "Even in these cases Canada was not formally a party to the meeting except as host."<sup>19</sup> Churchill and Roosevelt feared Canadian participation would bring similar demands from other allies and members of the United Nations. Much the same problem occurred throughout the war with Canada largely excluded from decisions that affected the deployment of Canadian forces. "His [King's] attitude...was that the situation was unsatisfactory, but there did not seem to be any useful initiative that Canada could take."<sup>20</sup> King was angered by this tendency to by-pass Canada, but did not communicate this to Churchill or Roosevelt.

Although Canadian relations with Britain and the United States were not close at the strategic level, at the tactical level a close co-operation was maintained. Ties with Britain had been close and cordial since the formation of Canadian fighting units. The continuation of such a policy

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<sup>18</sup> Stacey, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

was completely natural. The same bonds were not to be found in Canadian-American relations in 1939, but geographical propinquity, and common defence problems inevitably led to closer co-operation as the war progressed.

The initial formal recognition of a need for joint defence of the North American continent came in August 1940, when the Ogdensburg Agreement set up a Permanent Joint Board on Defence. The first item of joint interest was the defence of Newfoundland, which Canada had assumed in early 1940. In September of that year, Britain leased several bases in Newfoundland to the United States, and both Canada and the United States co-operated closely in defence of the island. Joint action in this sphere was extended to convoy protection and anti-submarine patrols by the forces of both nations. The North Atlantic Air Ferry system produced a need for close co-operation in the routing of aircraft from the United States through Canada, Newfoundland, Greenland and Iceland to Britain.<sup>21</sup>

On the western coast of North America, concerted efforts began after the attack on Pearl Harbour. The initial projects of concern were routes across Canada between Alaska and the United States proper. The Alaska highway, the sea route from Anchorage to Prince Rupert, and the air staging route were established in 1942. This air route was later used to ferry lend-lease aircraft to the Soviet

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 357-77.

Union from the United States, through Canada, Alaska and Siberia to Western Russia. Concerted efforts were also extended to the "canot" project to ship oil from the MacKenzie River by pipeline to Alaska.

The United States, through the Ogdensburg Agreement, supplied coastal defence guns for the protection of British Columbia, and early in 1942, six squadrons of Canadian fighters, a bomber squadron and anti-aircraft crews joined the air defence network of Alaska.<sup>22</sup> Two additional squadrons were also assigned to the Aleutian campaign as well as three armoured merchant cruisers and two corvettes for convoy protection. In addition, 5,300 Canadian troops took part in the expedition to Kiska.<sup>23</sup>

One unique Canadian-America experiment was the joint-nation 1st Special Service Regiment, a unit of high combat efficiency and courage which distinguished itself in Anzio as well as the main allied campaign in Italy.<sup>24</sup>

Canada and the United States synchronized efforts in the protection of locks and waterways between the two countries. A few Canadian troops were trained and stationed in the United States, and somewhat more American servicemen in Canada. On the whole, these arrangements were quite amicable.

Canadian troops, except in rare instances, did not fight under American command, and military relations, thus

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 377-90.

<sup>23</sup>Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>24</sup>Hannon, op. cit., p. 112.

producing little friction. The same cannot be said of relations between Canada and Great Britain, where Canadian forces overseas tended to be under British command. Almost from the first, the British discouraged separate Canadian commands, preferring to keep Canadian units as sub-sections of British commands. Even the top Canadian field commanders were directly under British control. When the 1st Overseas Canadian Army was formed in the spring of 1944, the overall direction and command responsibility was under British direction, as this incident at a meeting between King and Field Marshal Montgomery relates:

"Montgomery's purpose in meeting King was to tell him why the British High Command had insisted on the removal of General A.G.L. McNaughton as commander of the overseas Canadian Army some months earlier and to warn the Prime Minister that McNaughton's successor, General H.D.G. Crerar, would be removed too, if he failed in the European invasion."<sup>25</sup>

One major premise of Terence Robertson's book on Dieppe was that the operation was conceived and directed by Montgomery of the Army and Mountbatten of Combined Operations, with the Canadian 2nd Division commander, Hamilton Roberts being ignored in the planning, and given his instructions to carry out with no recourse to change or modification. However, it was Roberts who was blamed for the failures in the operation.<sup>26</sup>

The British also discouraged the formation of separate R.C.A.F. squadrons overseas. They favoured a system of joint

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<sup>25</sup>Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>26</sup>Robertson, op. cit., Part I.

commonwealth squadrons as part of the R.A.F. The British claim was that morale and combat efficiency improved with the friendly inter-nation rivalry that developed.<sup>27</sup> The Commonwealth Air Training Plan concept, it was felt, quite naturally led to a combined Commonwealth Air Force (under British control) rather than small separate air corps. The Canadian government did not approve of this system by which they would retain little control over their air crews once they went overseas.

Part of the problem stemmed from the different attitude towards relations with Britain from the political sphere and the military in Canada. MacKenzie King had fought to build and maintain Canadian sovereignty, and his policy during the war did not differ from this. However, the military leaders at all levels were strong Anglophones, and saw military co-operation with Britain as an absolute necessity, and British control over Canadian forces as quite natural. For example, there was no question, among the military on both sides of the ocean, that Canada would provide an expeditionary force for Europe, and planning had begun in the middle thirties.<sup>28</sup> King could not expect much help from the military in his moves to sustain Canadian independence.

In terms of Canadian sovereignty, the overall effect of World War II and the Canadian declaration of war is

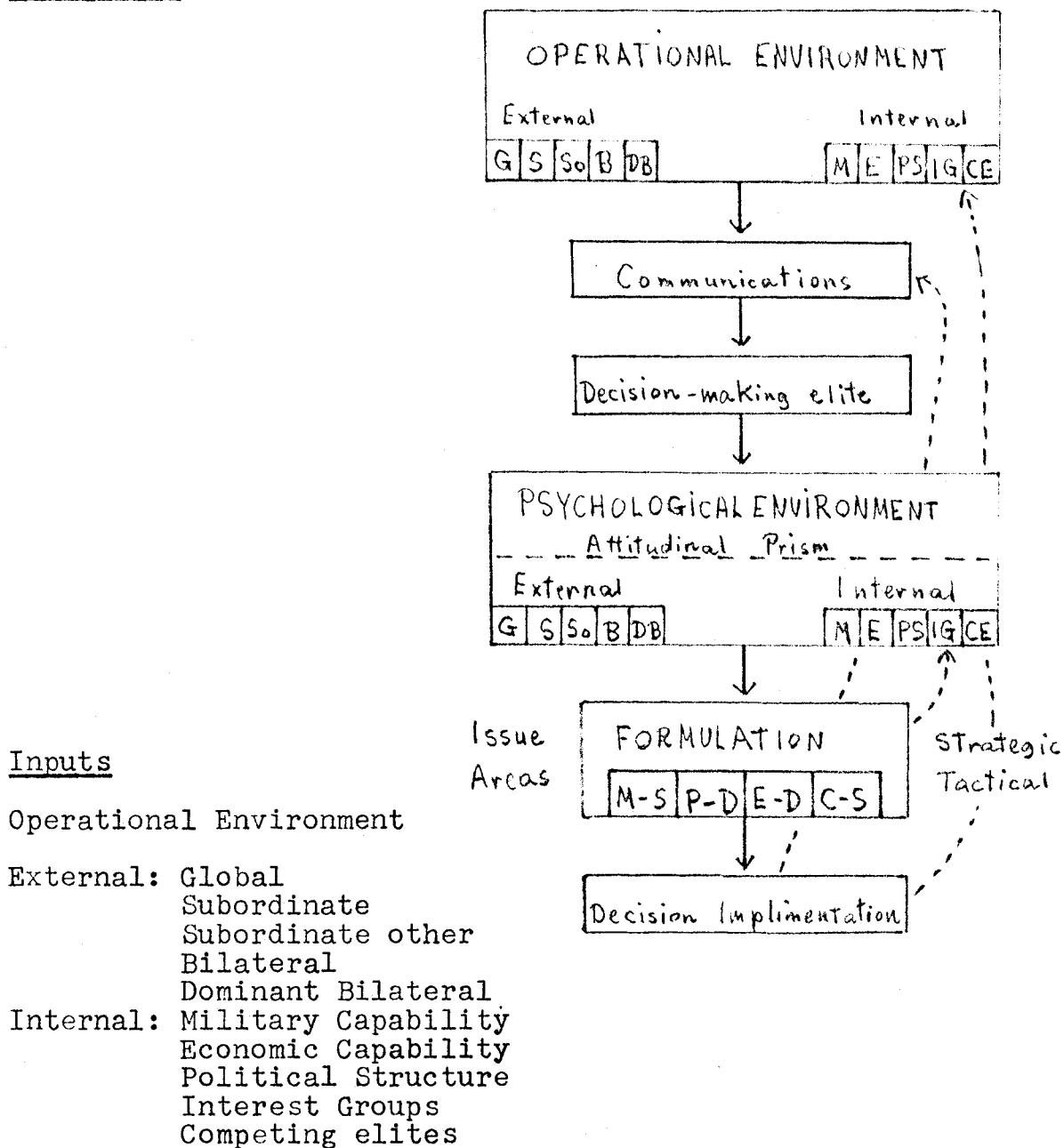
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<sup>27</sup> Stacey, in Careless and Brown, op. cit., p. 286.

<sup>28</sup> Swettenham, op. cit., pp. 301-2.

somewhat unclear. However, some concrete results can be discerned. The war drew the United States and Canada closer together in terms of defence and military co-operation, a bond that increased in the post-war years with the NORAD and NATO alliances, as well as closer co-operation in the exchange of military equipment, information and technical advances. The traditional military link between Canada and Britain, in many ways, was lost with the increased usage of American equipment in the Canadian Armed Forces.

In respect to Great Britain, Canadian independence and sovereignty of action was exerted by the separate declaration of war, setting a precedent for independent Canadian action in international affairs from that time forward. This was especially accentuated by the "week of neutrality" and the international recognition of that status. It would be rather trite to say that Canada became a nation on September 10, 1939, but that date was perhaps the last significant step in the continuing process of asserting Canada's independence from Great Britain.

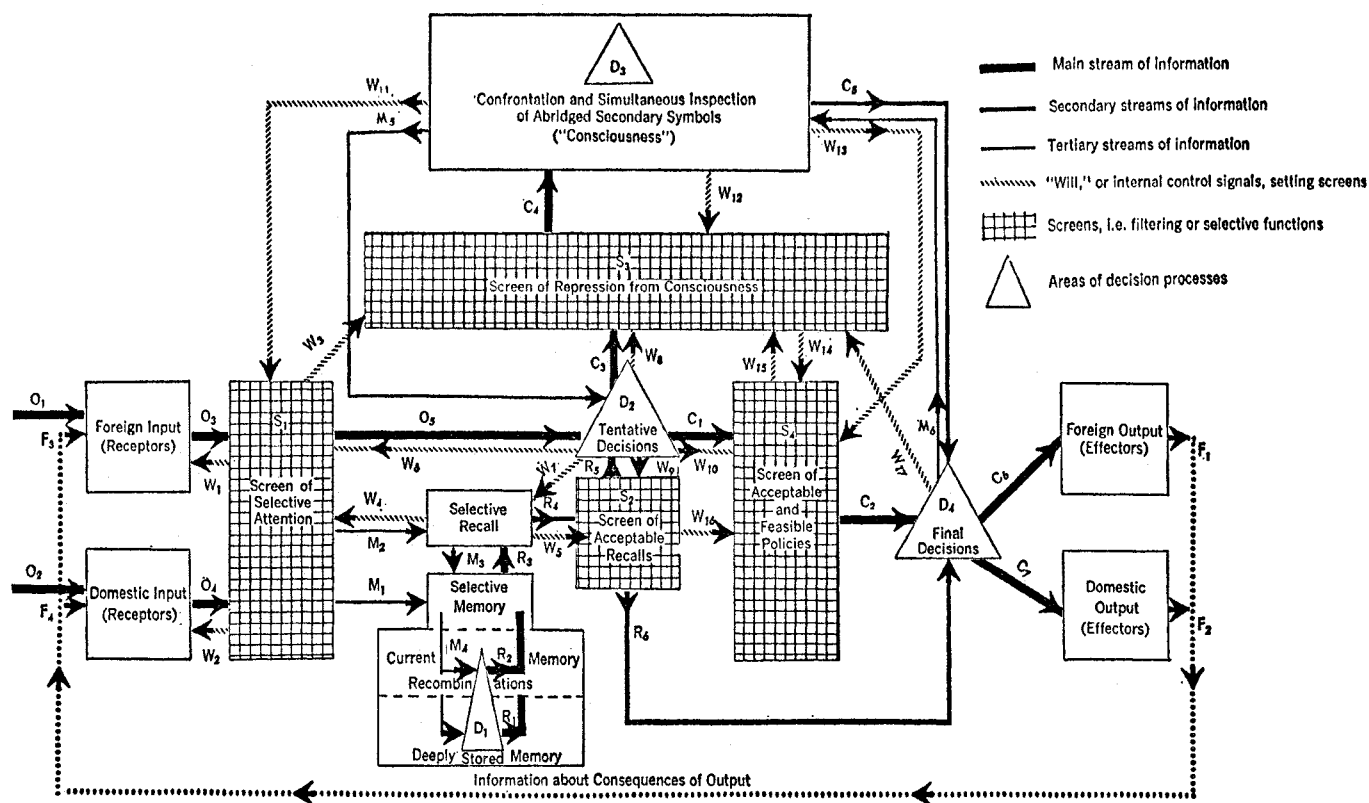
Appendix A:

M. Brecher, "A Framework for Research on Foreign Policy Behaviour", Journal of Conflict Resolution, April, 1969, p.80

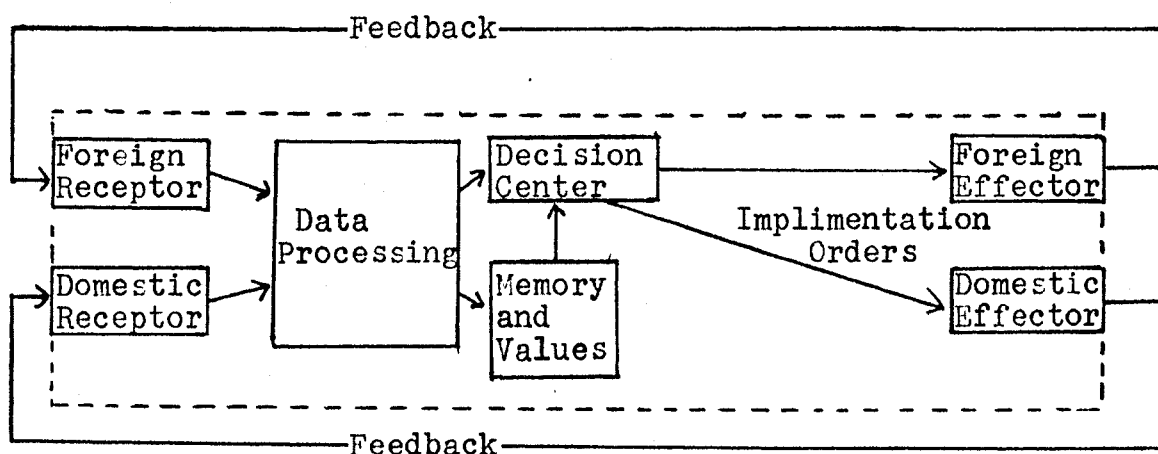


# Appendix B:

## A Functional Diagram of Information Flow in Foreign Policy Decisions:



A simplification of the Deutsch presentation



Oran Young, Systems in Political Science (New Jersey Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 51.

Appendix C:

Office of the President  
of the Prussian Cabinet Council,                      Berlin, Apr. 8, 1938

To His Excellency MacKenzie King,  
Prime Minister,  
Ottawa.

Your excellency,

...Your excellency is no doubt aware of the intention of a German syndicate to acquire certain forest resources in Anticosti from the Consolidated Paper Company for developmental purposes...

Because of certain questions that have been brought up in Parliament, I want to assure Your Excellency that this proposition is of a purely economic character and that the only purpose of the syndicate is the production of lumber. Any rumors about interference with sovereign rights and prerogatives or with military works rests on fancy...

With the assurance of my highest esteem,  
I am Your Excellency's devoted

(sqd) Goring.

W.L.M.King Papers, "Statements and Speeches", Vol 250, p. 213702

Appendix D:

Ontario Conservative Party Leader Colonel G.A. Drew mentioned his intention to "attack in these speeches Nazi barbarism with the utmost vigour".

In Protest:

E. Windels (German Consul General) to Dr. O.D. Skelton  
January 14, 1939.

"Given Colonel Drew's official position in the political life of Canada, on the one hand, and the government controlled set-up of radio broadcasting in Canada, on the other hand, I feel sure that my government could not but interpret the projected radio attacks in a light which would cast shadows in the good understandings between our two governments."

The Canadian reply was to reiterate that freedom of speech was enjoyed by everyone in Canada, as it should be everywhere.

W.L.M. King Papers, "Statements and Speeches", Vol 282,  
p. 238<sup>483</sup>

Appendix E:

Speech by Rt. Hon. Ernest Lapointe, Minister of Justice:

"We are bound by contract with Britain to give Britain the full use of the dry docks at Halifax and Esquimalt for British vessels...Of course we could put an end to the contract. Would Canadians be willing to do that? And if we did not, during a war in which we claimed neutrality, British vessels and British soldiers would come to Halifax or Esquimalt and it would be the duty of the Canadians there to prevent their coming and intern them if they came. Even if some people in some parts of Canada would like to do that, do you think the citizens of Halifax and Esquimalt would fight against British sailors and intern British vessels."

Canada, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol II (31 March, 1939) p. 2467

Appendix F:

A Petition for W.L.M. King from the Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario, March 23, 1939

"And that this Legislative Assembly of Ontario  
hereby petitions the Federal Parliament of Canada now  
in session to immediately pass legislation providing  
that in the event of a war emergency the wealth and man-  
power of Canada shall be mobilized by proclamation of the  
Governor-in-Council, for the duration of the war, in  
defence of our free institutions."

W.L.M. King Papers, "Statements and Speeches", Vol. 271,  
p. 229285

Appendix G:

Statements by French-Canadian Newspapers (August to September 11, 1939)

Le Droit (Ottawa)

August 24: "Like the late Sir Robert Borden in 1914, Mr. King in 1939 pursues the policy of the military solidarity of the Empire. Our external policy is determined in London. We could not have a finer example of this than what is now taking place."

September 2: "If Canada at this moment is placed on a war footing it is not in virtue of alliances or precise obligations but simply because the present government, in spite of the Statute of Westminster, holds that Canada is at war when England is at war."

Le Devoir (Montreal)

September 4: "Mr. King in making these declarations is obstinately set upon binding Parliament in advance, presenting it with a fait accompli...He/ King/ turns over to the London Government the task of deciding for us...Discontent, instinctive opposition are so marked, so profound, that demonstrations are being organized already."

Le Droit (Ottawa)

September 5: "Mr. King and his Cabinet have rejected the principle of neutrality, and it is hardly probable that Parliament would have adopted this principle, though it is the only logical one."

"French Canadian Press and the War," Memorandum to W.L.M. King, King Papers, "Statements and Speeches" Vol. 270, pp. 229117-21

Appendix H:

Reactions to the Foreign Policy Statements of May, 1939.

"The Prime Minister recieved unexpected commendation from the Montreal Gazette, which declared that he had defined Canada's position in a manner calculated to please patriotic Canadians, but another Conservative newspaper, the Ottawa Journal, sarcastically asserted that the same sort of pronouncement as Mr. King and Dr. Manion had made might have come from the leaders of some non-British democracy like Sweden. They had offered, declared the Journal, no evidence of the realisation of Canada's responsibilities as a partner in the British Commonwealth. The Toronto Globe and Mail (independent Liberal) while it found in Mr. MacKenzie King's speech some encouraging acknowledgement of Canada's obligations, regretting that he had not promised in decisive language the wholehearted co-operation that Mr. Chamberlain obviously desired from all of the nations of the Commonwealth...In the French-Canadian press the comments were severely critical, and they reflected an uneasiness that soon found overt expression in Quebec."

"Canada and the War Danger." Round Table, Vol. 29, June, 1939, pp. 574-5.

Appendix I:

W.J. Lindal (Manitoba Liberal Association) to W.L.M. King, July 8, 1939.

"Your duties as Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs are too arduous. Because of the serious international situation, the work in the External Department should be extended rather than curtailed, and in making that statement I am not criticizing the excellent work which has been done in the past. It occurred to me that prior to the next election you might put in practice an idea you had in mind a few years ago and appoint an Under-Secretary of External Affairs."

King emphatically rejected this appeal. It was not until 1947 that King allowed Louis St. Laurent to become the first Minister of External Affairs.

W.L.M. King Papers, "Statements and Speeches", Vol 271, p. 2293<sup>40</sup>



Appendix J:

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT  
of the  
RIGHT HON. WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING  
(September 7, 1939)

Prime Minister, President of the  
Privy Council, Secretary of State  
for External Affairs.....Rt. Hon. W.L.M. King

Member of the Administration and  
Minister without Portfolio.....Hon. Raoul Dandurand

Minister of Mines and Resources.....Hon. T.A. Crerar

Minister of Justice and Attorney  
General of Canada.....Rt. Hon. Ernest Lapointe

Minister of Public Works.....Hon. P.J.A. Cardin

Minister of Trade and Commerce.....Hon. W.D. Euler

Minister of Finance.....Hon. J.L. Ralston

Postmaster General.....Hon. N.A. McLarty

Secretary of State.....Rt. Hon. Ernest Lapointe

Minister of National Defence.....Hon. I.A. MacKenzie

Minister of Pensions and National  
Health.....Hon. C.G. Power

Minister of National Revenue.....Hon. J.L. Ilsley

Minister of Fisheries.....Hon. J.E. Michaud

Minister of Labour.....Hon. N.M. Rogers

Minister of Transport.....Hon. C.D. Howe

Minister of Agriculture.....Hon. J.G. Gardiner

Minister without Portfolio.....Hon. J.A. MacKinnon

Canada, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of  
Commons), Special War Session, 1939, p. iii

Appendix K:

FROM: THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OTTAWA CANADA  
TO: THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA IN GREAT BRITAIN LONDON

MOST IMMEDIATE

Ottawa, September 9th, 1939.

SECRETCYPHERNo. 306

Secret. No. 306. It is requested that the following submission be made to His Majesty the King, Begins:

The Prime Minister of Canada presents his humble duty to His Majesty the King.

It is expedient that a Proclamation should be issued in the name of His Majesty, in Canada, declaring that a state of war with the German Reich has existed in Canada as and from September (date to be inserted later). [10th September, 1939]

The Prime Minister of Canada, accordingly, humbly submits to His Majesty the petition of the King's Privy Council for Canada that His Majesty may approve the issuing of such a Proclamation in His name.

The Prime Minister of Canada remains His Majesty's most faithful and obedient servant.

W.L. MacKenzie King  
Prime Minister of Canada.

Ottawa, September (date to be inserted later), 1939.

Ends.

Appendix K: (continued)

It is requested that you present the above submission in writing immediately to the King, informing His Majesty that upon approval by Parliament of the address to His Excellency a short telegram in clear will be sent, asking you to complete the submission. You will inform the King that His Majesty's Government in Canada desires that His Majesty's approval be communicated immediately by telegram, either directly or through you, for publication in Canada by Proclamation in His Majesty's name in the Canada Gazette. Formal submission in writing will follow.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

"R"

232182 155

Appendix K: (Continued)

TELEGRAM

From THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA IN GREAT BRITAIN  
To THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, CANADA

MOST IMMEDIATE

CYPHER

No. 367

LONDON, 10th September, 1939.

No. 367. Following for Prime Minister,  
Begins:

Your telegrams Nos. 301 and 306, and  
unnumbered of the 9th September. Have just  
returned from Royal Lodge - Windsor, where  
His Majesty The King received me and gave  
his approval to your submission at 1.08 p.m.

VINCENT MASSEY

Rec'd Ottawa, 10.45 a.m.  
D.S.T. 10th Sept. 1939.

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